



A Dog Story.



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THIS WAS QUITE A JOKE.

ROMULUS AND REMUS

A DOG STORY

BY ✓

CHARLES R TALBOT

Author of

Royal Lowrie

Royal Lowrie's Last Year at St. Olaves

Honor Bright

A Double Masquerade

etc., etc.

35
ILLUSTRATIONS BY FRANK T MERRILL



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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

A DISCIPLE OF THOREAU	9
---------------------------------	---

CHAPTER II.

THE ADVENTURES OF A SCARECROW	22
---	----

CHAPTER III.

THE PURSUIT OF A YELLOW PONY	37
--	----

CHAPTER IV.

AN ENCOUNTER WITH AN ICEBERG	53
--	----

CHAPTER V.

ROMULUS AUT REMUS?	67
------------------------------	----

CHAPTER VI.

A MORNING RECEPTION	82
-------------------------------	----

CHAPTER VII.

THE HEPTAGON ROOM	105
-----------------------------	-----

CHAPTER VIII.

AN ANONYMOUS COMMUNICATION	128
------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER IX.

A LITTLE SURPRISE	141
-----------------------------	-----

CHAPTER X.

TWO COUSINS FROM CORK	154
---------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XI.

SOME ICE CREAM AND A PICKLE	177
---------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XII.

ROMULUS ET REMUS	199
----------------------------	-----

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

	PAGE.
THIS WAS QUITE A JOKE	<i>Front.</i>
SINKER HOTCHKISS APPEARS IN CAMP	51 41
IT WAS A DESPERATE MOMENT	77
"HE IS NOT MINE," SAID THE YOUNG LADY FIRMLY	123
THEY CAUTIOUSLY ADVANCED BETWEEN THE HEDGES	161
THE OLD COMMODORE STOOD FIRMLY, WEAPON IN HAND	187

ROMULUS AND REMUS.

CHAPTER I.

A DISCIPLE OF THOREAU.



RISTRAM TUCKER-

MAN, a young gentleman in knickerbockers, eye-glasses and a tennis suit, lay on the lawn before his father's house, his chin resting in his hands, read-

ing a book. He was thoroughly comfortable, at this moment, in mind and body. It was a lovely June day; his position was comfortable; he had just passed, without condition, his entrance examinations at college, and the long vacation was all before him; and he was reading a book that

pleased him very much. He presently took off his eyeglasses (he always took off his eyeglasses when he spoke to anybody, even though it were an imaginary person) and, tapping the page before him, he approvingly exclaimed, "Henry, my boy, permit me to observe that whatever anybody else may think, *I* believe that you know what you are talking about. *That* is philosophy!" He tapped the book again. Then he closed it and threw it (not ungently) from him, and taking out his handkerchief thoughtfully polished his eyeglasses. "And I don't see," he continued, "why I shouldn't go and do exactly the same thing."

The book was a small volume, bound in brown muslin, of that certain style and appearance which a well-known Boston firm gave uniformly to its standard publications fifteen or twenty years ago; and its title, as one now seeks it, is *Walden*. It is, therefore, no less a personage than Mr. Thoreau whom Master Tuckerman has thus apostrophized as "Henry, my boy," and of whose wisdom and good sense he has been speaking in terms of such patronizing approval. But if the

Sage of Walden could have appeared to him in the flesh at that instant, he would have jumped up and taken off his hat to him with all the reverence in the world. And the dear old philosopher, we need not doubt, would have smiled benignantly upon him; and liked him all the better for what he had overheard; and given him some quaint, kindly advice, too, as to the carrying out of his scheme. That scheme, it will be understood, was the going into the woods somewhere and living all by himself, as Mr. Thoreau himself had done; though no doubt Tristram would do this in his own way if he did it and more for the fun of the thing than for its principle.

And of course he did do it. That is what this story is about. Early the next Monday morning he began his preparations. He had his wagon half loaded and was calculating that he would be ready to start by noon, when his friend Johnnie Lovering appeared upon the scene.

Johnnie Lovering was a short, stout, round-faced, not particularly bright, but thoroughly good-natured lad, whose name, after a fashion they have

at Mowry and Goff's, had been shortened by his schoolmates into "Lovey"—a term not exactly descriptive, it is to be feared, of the place the young gentleman held in their affections. Not that anybody really disliked "Lovey;" he was too good humored for that. But he was rather a tiresome fellow; he was too indolent to take active part in out-of-door sports; and he had the name of thinking more of what he ate and drank than of anything else on earth—all qualities which, although in his case they were only laughed at, were not yet calculated to make him popular with his fellows. The Loverings and the Tuckermans were near neighbors; and ever since their pinafore days Johnnie had always been excessively fond of Tristram's society, a passion which the latter found at times very inconvenient.

Johnnie, with his hands in his pockets and an unmistakable air of having just eaten a good breakfast, came sauntering into the stable yard where Tristram was at work, about half-past nine.

"I say," he uttered, surveying with astonishment

the vast pile of goods — tents, tins, blankets, tools and various articles and implements — which Tristram proposed to take with him, “you’re not going to move, are you?”

“Ah, it is you, is it?” Tristram responded, pausing in his work and transferring to his visitor the scowl with which he had been at that moment regarding a double oil-stove which he found too heavy to lift into the wagon. “You don’t mean to say you’re only just through your breakfast?”

“Why, yes,” said Johnnie. “That is, I’m just through with my *second* breakfast. I’ve had two breakfasts this morning: one with father, when he went down town, and one with the rest, later. We had some awful nice muffins, you know” —

“All right,” Tristram bluntly interrupted. “If you’ve had two breakfasts you’re just in trim to help me put this stove on the wagon. Take hold here, will you?”

So Johnnie took hold; and then, having helped further to bestow upon the load an ice cream freezer, a tool chest, and several other articles more or less heavy, he renewed his inquiry.

"Well," said Tristram in answer, "I'm going to turn Waldensian."

"Going to turn *what?*" asked Johnnie, looking at him as though he had said he was going to turn Hindoo.

"I'm going to follow in the footsteps of the illustrious Thoreau."

"The illustrious Tau Rho!" Johnnie repeated the name — just as it sounded to him — as though it were made up of two Greek letters. "Who in the world is *he?*"

"He," explained Tristram, "was a wise man of Concord who thought it all nonsense for people to live in houses they couldn't half pay for, and wear good clothes just for other people to look at, and who went into the woods and built him a shanty by a pond, and lived in it a whole year for twenty-eight dollars and ninepence."

"And is that what you're going to do?" inquired Johnnie, profoundly mystified.

"Well, yes; or something like that. I'm going into the woods to live — for a week or two, at least — all by myself."

Johnnie allowed his imagination to dwell for a moment upon the scheme thus indicated, and his eye kindled. "That's a capital notion," said he. "Only you ought not to go alone."

"Why not?" asked Tristram.

"Oh! because you oughtn't. Take me with you — will you?"

Tristram gravely shook his head. "I don't think my friend Thoreau would approve."

"O, yes, he would. Come; do take me."

"I can't do it, dear. It's the whole point of the thing, going alone."

"You'll be dreadfully lonesome."

"That's just what I'm going for — to be lonesome," observed Tristram dryly.

"O, but I want to go awfully. *Please* take me, Tris." Johnnie spoke now in accents of entreaty.

But Tristram still shook his head. "I can't do it. It's against the Waldensian principles. Isn't it, Rom?"

The last words were addressed to a new comer, a handsome Gordon Setter dog, who at that instant entered the stable yard and came trotting up to

Tristram. The latter looked down at him fondly. “*We* don’t need any company to keep us from being lonesome, do we?”

“Oh!” cried Johnnie with great bitterness. “So you’re going to take *him*, are you?”

“Well, I should think so!” was the answer.

“Humph! What would your Mr. Tau Rho say to that? Did *he* take a dog with him?”

“No; but he would have, if he’d had such a dog as Rom. He didn’t take an ice cream freezer, or an oil-stove, or a patent boiler; but I’m going to. You see” — Tristram rubbed his chin with his eyeglasses rather sardonically — “I’m using Thoreau’s idea, but with modern improvements. He says himself that if anybody tries his plan, he hopes they’ll do it in their own way.”

“Then why not take me?” persisted Johnnie.

“What? — as a ‘modern improvement’? No, my dear boy, I should have to class you as a luxury. And I mustn’t take any luxuries.”

And then, still laughing, he stooped and held out his hand to the dog. “Romulus, old fellow,” said he in tones of good-humored affection, “give

me your paw. Never since the day when first I beheld thee, a little shivering pup at a Boston Bench show (and loved thee instantly and resolved to make thee mine at any cost), never since that day have thou and I been separated for a single night. And now they ask if I am going to take thee with me. Indeed I am! I might leave my boots behind me, or my tennis racket, or my head; but *thee* — Wherever I go, thou goest."

He took the dog's head between his hands and rubbed it fondly as he finished, and then with a playful pull at his ears, he let him go. Romulus, who had, to tell the truth, listened to this harangue and submitted to his master's caresses with an air of being rather bored, turned at once and trotted away again. He was, at a glance, a fine specimen of his breed, perfectly made and marked, well grown, although not yet past the days of puppyhood, and with a good deal of the manners and clumsiness of the puppy still clinging to him. His master, who valued him rather as a pet and companion than for purposes of hunting, had taken no

special pains with his training, and had indeed done more to spoil than to improve him.

Johnnie, when Rom had gone, earnestly resumed his entreaties to be allowed to join the proposed expedition, using all the arguments he could think of to show that it would be to Tristram's advantage to take him along—to all which, save one, the latter turned a deaf ear. This one—which prevailed, finally—is worth repeating.

“You won't enjoy it, I know you won't,” Johnnie had gloomily declared at the last. “Just think what a doleful time you'll have, sitting down to dinner all by yourself. You won't be able to eat a mouthful. It's too bad, too—such capital dinners as you get up.”

It was these words that touched a tender chord in Tristram's heart and caused him to waver. Johnnie saw his advantage and pressed it. “You know it's no fun to cook for yourself alone. Is it, now?”

Tristram soberly shook his head. “No,” he acknowledged, “it isn't.” Alas, nobody knew it better than he. Cooking was his hobby. He

delighted in it, and prided himself upon his skill. But, as Johnnie had said, where would be the fun of cooking with nobody to cook for?

"And you once said I was just the person you would like to cook for," pursued Johnnie. "Don't you remember?"

Yes, Tristram remembered. And he had said it with all sincerity. If there was a person in the world fond of good things to eat, it was Johnnie. And he had an unfailing appetite and a perfect digestion. Yes; Lovey was just the person Tristram would like to cook for.

"Very well," said he, "I'll take you. You'll want some blankets, some old clothes, a net hammock, your fishing rod, your tennis racket, and *not* your concertina. I am quite certain Mr. Thoreau would not have approved of *that*. Be on hand here at twelve o'clock."

And so, later in the day, mounted upon the wagon, with their load of *impedimenta* behind them and Romulus trotting merrily along beside the wheel, they set out upon their journey. They rode northward all that day and a portion of the

next — through Diamond Hill and Cumberland, across the State line, and well up into Massachusetts. The morrow's sun was just marking the hour of noon as, from a lofty point in their road, suddenly burst upon their view — like the Pacific upon that of Balboa — the object of their quest. Right before them, only a mile away, lay a pretty country village, roofed with elms, its red roofs and tall spires and white, outlying farms "fair shining in the sun"; and to its left, deep hidden among grassy slopes and forest thickets, a beautiful pond of water, several miles in extent, glittered on their sight. Tristram raised a shout as he beheld it. "Lo, there is our Walden. On the banks of yonder pond we will make our camp."

By a road which skirted the village, and then by a cart track which led through field and wood, they made their way at length to the shore of the pond and rested there, well content with the nearer view that greeted them. The lake (for lake it was rather than pond) was lovely beyond description — a perfect picture with its limpid water reflecting the blue sky, its rocky islands, its

wooded borders, the wondrous shadows wrought upon its surface by the overhanging trees. From its further shore a soft breeze came over and refreshed the heated travellers. The water broke, with a low, lapping sound, upon a sandy beach at their feet. A small skiff with oars within it, lay half drawn from the water close at hand. An unused boat-house, with a platform before it built over the water, stood there with open door.

“Yes,” Tristram said again, “this is exactly what we were looking for. That boat-house will serve us for a dwelling. The platform, with canvas spread over, will make a capital veranda. This grove, with its carpet of pine needles, shall be our parlor. This sandy basin here is our bath-tub. The boat will take us about. The pond is our well and fish-market. Everything is complete.”

“Yes,” assented Johnnie. “And over yonder is an ice-house where we can get our ice. We can have lemonade and ice cream every day.”

And so, without asking yes or no of anybody, they took possession of the spot.

CHAPTER II.

THE ADVENTURES OF A SCARECROW.

TRISTRAM was very fond of fishing. "*Nulla dies sine linea*," he had observed to Johnnie as they sat looking out over the pond on the evening of their arrival; and then he had gravely supplied the English for his Latin: "No day without its fish-line," or, still more freely, "Lovey, my boy, we'll go a-fishing every day."

In pursuance of this resolve the two boys, accompanied of course by Romulus, had pulled across the pond the very next morning and flung their tackle in a shady nook that seemed to promise well for their purpose. The fish however did not bite; and at length, directed by a man on shore, they had landed and made their way a half-mile or more across the fields to a smaller tract of water known as Pickerel Pool, where they found

capital sport and, in an hour's time, captured a basketful of good-sized pickerel and perch. Returning just before noon they stopped a moment at a farmhouse, Tristram remaining outside while his friend went in to beg an onion or two with which to season their dinner. Rom meanwhile went off toward the barn on an exploring expedition of his own.

Presently Tristram, growing tired of waiting, started on alone. A short distance along the road was a bar-way which led, by a wheel-track along the edge of a cornfield, back to where they had left the boat. Just beyond this bar-way, fastened to a tree, was a yellow pony and village cart; the cart, harness and mountings all matching the pony as nearly as was possible in color — a rather striking little turnout which our hero regarded for a moment with interest, wondering how it came to be there. Then he turned into the bar-way.

Half-way along the wheel-track he halted under a large oak-tree that stood close to the stone wall, and (his friend still being nowhere in sight) sat down to wait. Just before him, two or three rods

away, a scarecrow — a curious combination of broomsticks and old clothes — kept rigid guard over the growing corn, as yet too young to be left to itself. Tristram called out to it and jocularly bade it good day, reminded at the same time of a passage from his friend Thoreau in which the writer speaks of passing a cornfield one day and “recognizing, in a coat and hat upon a stake, the owner of the farm himself, only a little more weather-beaten than when he saw him last.” And the lad reflected, looking down at his own somewhat extraordinary attire (he had on a soiled canvas game-coat, a pair of wading boots, and his trousers, as it happened, had been sadly torn that morning by the tramp through the woods) that he would not make a bad scarecrow himself. After a moment he lay back upon the grass with his hands clasped beneath his head and listened drowsily to the droning hum of insects that filled the air, and the monotonous cawing of crows in the distant wood. And thus, without meaning to do anything of the kind, he fell asleep.

He was awakened, it could hardly have been

many minutes later, by the sound of voices close at hand. He started up and sat staring about him, confused and astonished.

“Now, Auntie!” “Now, Jemima!” “If you do tell of me!” “Well, if I do?” “I’ll never speak to you again as long as I live. You’re too bad!”

These were the first words that Tristram distinctly heard. The voices were feminine, one of them rather childish and petulant, the other high-pitched also, in laughing mockery of the first. They came from a point directly behind him, over the wall. A moment’s silence ensued.

Tristram very cautiously turned his head; but the ground where he sat sloped decidedly from the roots of the tree, so that the wall was considerably above him, and he could see nothing. “Ah!” he thought, “here are two of my country cousins, an ‘Auntie’ and her niece, it seems, out for a ramble amid their native buttercups. Far be it from me, however” — the voice of Miss Jemima at this moment was heard again — “to sit here and listen to a conversation not intended for my ears.”

He rose to his feet. "I am glad to have met you, ladies,"—he turned and made his invisible companions a half-bow—"but really I must be going." And he softly moved away.

He had gone not half a dozen steps, however, when suddenly the sound of the voices grew more open and distinct. He glanced back and caught sight of a hat or bonnet above the wall. They had risen and—yes, they were actually about to get over the wall into the cornfield. It was Jemima's own sweet tones that told him so. "Here, Auntie," she said, "here's a first-rate place to climb over."

Tristram made himself a face. Another moment, of course, would discover to the strangers his own vicinity. He cared little, however, who his "country cousins" were or what they might think; and his impulse now was to continue his way, paying no more attention to them. But then by chance his eye fell again on the scarecrow close by, and instantly a new purpose seized him—a purpose suggested, no doubt, by the train of thought he had fallen into a little while before,

but one which he would hardly have entertained seriously had he taken a moment to consider it. Quick as thought he sprang to the side of the scarecrow, pulled his big hat over his face, thrust his fishing-rod (done up in a bundle) into the ground before him, shifted his fish-basket (which was slung beneath his coat to protect it from the sun) around upon his back so that it made a veritable hump, and then, bending over, there he stood, perfectly motionless, an old man leaning on his cane — as complete a specimen of cornfield scarecrow as one would wish to see. Just what his object was in striking this absurd attitude he could not himself precisely have told. He had been seized with an impulse and had obeyed it — “just for the fun of the thing.” From the corner of his uncovered eye he looked out at the real scarecrow beside him and laughed aloud. “How are you, brother,” he said. “I fancy they’ll find it hard work to tell us apart.”

All this of course had taken but an instant. Then, listening intently, but not daring now even to take a peep in the direction of the two strangers,

he heard them slowly clamber over the wall and halt a moment in the wheel-track, talking together all the while.

“Yes,” the voice of Jemima was heard to say, “here we are, all right. This leads straight out to the road. I can see Tommy’s head, this minute.”

At these words the pretended scarecrow pricked up its ears. Who in the world was “Tommy”?

There was a sound of retreating footsteps. Tristram felt a pang of disappointment. Were they going off without even perceiving that he was there? He was half inclined to cough, in order to call their attention. But, in the same instant, an exclamation from Miss Jemima told him that nothing of the sort would be necessary.

“O, Auntie, look!” she cried. “See those scarecrows. Ar’n’t they funny? I never saw two together before, did you?”

Then, of course, Tristram knew that his time had come. The eyes of the assembled multitude were upon him. He braced himself and stood rigid as a grenadier in a parlor tableau, all the while laughing inwardly. This was quite a joke.

The "Auntie" however seemed to regard him rather absently. "Why, yes," she answered slowly, "we often see two, do we not? How sweet these lilies are."—She must have had some flowers in her hand.

"But, Auntie," persisted Jemima, "do look! did you ever see anything so natural as that old man? They have actually given him a hand—and fingers. *Look!*"

There was a moment's silence. Tristram, meanwhile, looked too, out along his extended arm to the hand that held the cane, and felt instantly the force of Miss Jemima's remark. His hand, where it grasped the fishing-rod, was quite bare and exposed (a fact entirely overlooked by him when he had taken up his position) and, examined closely from the point where the others stood, could hardly fail to be recognized as the appendage of a human body. He softly whistled to himself as he perceived the fact, and felt the silence grow ominous. Then suddenly realizing that concealment was no longer possible, he slowly turned his head, without moving his body at all, and looked at his com-

panions. The face that was thus unexpectedly presented to their gaze, save that it was plainly a living one, might well have been taken for a part of the make-up of the supposed scarecrow, so funny did it look with its burned, freckled skin, its eyeglasses upon its nose, and the irresistibly comical expression that spread over all its homely features. If a scarecrow *could* come to life, this was exactly the way one might expect him to look.

The expression on our hero's face quickly changed to one of unmixed astonishment, however, as he now for the first time actually *saw* his companions and discovered what they were really like. He saw two girls, one a young lady of very nearly his own age, one a child, a slender, sprite-like little personage of nine or ten. Country cousins, indeed! These two were, at a glance, young people of unmistakable style and consideration, as genteel and sophisticated in dress and air as any he had ever seen coming down College Hill or going into the Athenæum. The younger did not just now engage his particular attention. She wore a white Tam O'Shanter cap and was

clad, otherwise, in the ordinary morning costume of a city child in the country. But by the older he was decidedly impressed. She was a strikingly handsome young lady, dark rather than light, with a face full of life and a pair of the brightest black eyes Tristram had ever seen. Her dress, he saw, was modish and becoming; though he was too much of a boy to take in its details, save that he distinctly appreciated a jaunty little hat, whose scarlet ribbons, tied beneath her chin, served to intensify the fiery expression with which she regarded him. For fiery (and nothing less) that expression certainly was. Her face seemed actually aflame as she stood there with burning cheeks and flashing eyes, fixing upon our mortified hero a look of hot, wrathful, consuming indignation. This young lady, clearly, was not one bit frightened or dismayed by this unlooked-for coming to life of a scarecrow in a cornfield. Nor was she, either, at all amused by it. She was simply and unequivocally angry. Tristram felt very uncomfortable indeed as he met her scorching glance, and heartily wished he had been more thoughtful. He

was by no means a diffident or awkward youth, however, and he quickly resolved to put the best face possible upon the affair. Straightening up, therefore, and pulling off his hat and eyeglasses, he made her his best bow.

“I humbly beg your pardon,” said he, in that grave yet half humorous way of his that often left people in doubt whether he was serious or jesting. “The fact is, I — well, I do assure you that until this moment I did not see you at all.”

These words, even to one aware that they were true enough in point of actual fact, might well have seemed a feeble apology, though the best that poor Tristram (who really had nothing at all to say for himself) could at the moment frame; but to the person addressed they sounded like absolute untruth. Of course he had known that they were there, and it was for their benefit that this farce had been enacted. The young lady cared very little, however, for that matter, what he had to say for himself. She wished to resent the liberty he had taken, not to pardon it. She did not honor his speech, therefore, with any answer

whatever. She simply drew herself up a little taller and regarded him still more wrathfully for a single moment. Then she turned abruptly from him, and (with a low word to her companion, who instantly joined her, she walked rapidly away in the direction of the road.

Tristram stood and looked after, utterly chagrined and astounded at this sudden turn of affairs. What kind of a way was this to treat anybody! Of course it was ridiculous — what he had done! but after all there was no great harm in it; he had only meant it for a joke. But the young lady, it seemed, did not look at it in that light. Whew! What a look that was she had given him! He took out his handkerchief and wiped his brow. “I feel as though I’d been under a sun-glass,” he declared. “It’s a wonder I didn’t just shrivel up and turn to cinder on the spot.” Then, as he thought of it, the utter absurdity of the whole thing came over him afresh, and he burst out laughing. The girls heard him, and the little one looked fiercely back as if to resent an added insult. Tristram started forward, resolved to overtake them

and renew his apologies; but he presently slackened his pace, shaking his head and acknowledging to himself that it would do no good. The look with which his former attempt at explanation had been received was still vividly present to him. He continued his way, however, for the purpose of meeting Johnnie who could now be seen coming along the road from the house.

But the mishappenings of the morning were not yet over. Tristram, still keeping an interested eye upon the two girls, saw them, a minute later, pass out through the bar-way and turn down the road toward the pony and village cart. That unique establishment, then, belonged to them. He remembered the allusion to "Tommy," and wondered at himself that he had not connected them with it before. The girls unfastened the pony, Tristram and Johnnie, at the precise moment of their doing so, being each some half-dozen rods away, one in the field, the other in the road. All at once Johnnie was heard shouting to Rom; and the next moment Tristram saw the dog dash past the bar-way in the direction of the girls. He

thought nothing of this, however — Rom was not likely to harm anybody — until, a moment later still, looking across the bit of field and through the rail fence that now separated him from the heroines of his late adventure, he became witness of a scene that filled him first with wonderment and then with honest wrath. Rom, urged no doubt by a puppy-like disposition (of which his master had never yet been able to break him) to make acquaintance with strangers at all times and places, was running directly toward the girls. The latter, observing his approach, seemed suddenly, for some reason, to be vastly excited by it. The little girl, who had already climbed into the cart, stood up and clapped her hands together, while the young lady, throwing across the dasher the reins she had just taken from the pony's back, turned and walked a step or two to meet the dog. Rom ran straight to her, and the next instant was taken full into her arms, where for a moment he was seen to be closely held while caresses and endearments were lavished upon him without stint.

This, of itself, although hardly to have been

looked for, perhaps, was not unaccountable. Rom, as has been said, would go to anybody; and the young lady might be extravagantly fond of dogs. It was what followed that was the puzzling part of the affair. The young lady turned at length and walked back to the cart, taking Romulus with her, her hand seeming to rest upon his collar. Then all at once she was seen to take him bodily in her arms and put him into the vehicle, getting in after him with a single quick spring herself. Then, once more taking the reins, she snapped her long whip, the little pony started off at a brisk trot, and lo! the entire equipage, pony, cart, ladies, dog and all, swiftly vanished down the road in a dusty cloud of its own making; while, whistling, shouting, exclaiming—but, alas! in vain—Tristram and his friend stood gazing after, wondering with all their wits what so unwarranted a proceeding could mean.

CHAPTER III.

THE PURSUIT OF A YELLOW PONY.



HAT does this mean, I should like to know," Tristram sternly demanded of Johnnie as the two came together at the bar-way.

"I'm sure I don't know,"

Johnnie answered with entire sincerity. "I had just come out of the house, and was walking along the road, when Rom caught sight of those girls, and off he went. And then, the first thing I knew, they had him in the cart and were driving off. Who are they, anyway?"

"How do I know? I wasn't born and brought up here." Tristram was thoroughly angry at what had occurred, and was disposed to visit his wrath upon Johnnie as the only available object.

"They didn't look as though they were born and brought up here, either," observed Johnnie. "Do you suppose they did it in joke?" Johnnie's experience of girls was not extensive ; but so far as it went it quite warranted this question.

"Joke?" cried Tristram. "I don't see the joke." And then, gloomily looking down the road after the vanished village cart, he wondered if it *could* be a joke, a piece of extemporized revenge on the part of the young lady for the trick he had played in the cornfield. There had been nothing in her manner (during the short time he had had to observe it) to indicate that she was given to joking ; but what else could this be but a joke? She could hardly mean to steal his dog. He said nothing of this to Johnnie, however. He was in no mood to relate the scarecrow episode. "This wouldn't have happened if you had come along," he accused him, instead. "What kept you so long, anyway?"

"Well," answered Johnnie frankly, "the woman had a custard pudding she'd just taken out of the oven. And I bought it of her. And then

she wouldn't let me have the dish, so I had to eat it there. And it was pretty hot, you know — ”

“I'll warrant you!” Tristram exclaimed angrily. But then Johnnie looked so innocent, and the thing was so ridiculous, that he could not help laughing. “At any rate,” he declared, with a threatening nod, “they'd better bring back my dog. If he doesn't put in an appearance before night, we'll go and hunt him up.”

And with this resolve in mind, as they walked back to their boat still discussing the matter, Tristram quite recovered his humor again. The prospect of a further acquaintance with the young lady (notwithstanding what had passed) was by no means disagreeable to him.

At the camp they found Sinker Hothckiss. Sinker Hotchkiss was an old friend of, now, nearly twenty-four hours' standing. The afternoon before, just after the late dinner that followed their arrival, the two boys had been talking together, Tristram sitting in the boat and Johnnie lying on the bank near by, when the former felt a sudden grasp on his collar. Twisting his head around, a

somewhat distorted view of his captor revealed to him a tall, wiry, ill-dressed and rather ill-conditioned individual who fiercely returned his glance out of a pair of fishy green eyes.

"Whose boat is this you're bailin' the water out on?" the stranger demanded.

"My friend," Tristram coolly replied, without moving (as indeed he could not, at that moment), "it seems to me you are rather familiar on short acquaintance. Take your hand off my collar please; this is what I call a case of unlawful seizure" —

"Who told you you might hev this boat?" shouted the other, tightening his grasp.

"—A case of unlawful seizure," Tristram imperturbably continued, though he was now nearly choked. "And unless you release me instantly, I shall write to the Secretary of the State."

This threat so far made its impression upon the other as to cause him to relax his hold, whereupon Tristram, by a sudden jerk, freed himself altogether and confronted him.

"I want ye t' understand that this boat b'longs to me," the stranger now informed him.



SINKER HOTCHKISS APPEARS IN CAMP.

"Indeed?" said Tristram. "I had already inferred as much from some things you let drop."

The other looked at him a moment with his filmy eyes, slowly setting him down as a queer customer.

"Who be ye, anyway?" he asked in more reasonable tones.

"Ah! You should have asked that question in the first place, my friend," said Tristram. "This way you have of stepping up to a man and twisting his collar until he can't see out of his eyes isn't just the thing, you know, without an introduction. However, as you didn't know any better, I forgive you. Permit me to introduce myself. My name is Thoreau. Perhaps you have heard of me. This gentleman here is my friend, Mr. Ralph Waldo Emerson. We are in the philosophy business, and have come out here in search of *Lusi Naturæ*. We are glad to have met you."

"Wall," returned the other, not seeing the point of all this (such point as there was) but quite determined as to his own point, "you don't want to use my boat."

“Excuse me, Mr.——. You did not mention your name?”

“My name is Hotchkiss — Sinker Hotchkiss.”

“Excuse me, Mr. Hotchkiss, but that is just what we do want to do—use your boat. We want to use it for a week or two. What can we have it for, by the week?”

And Mr. Hotchkiss, whose business it was to make money out of strangers, finding the exorbitant price he named not demurred at, and being a not ill-natured fellow at bottom, modified now to some extent the harshness of his manner; and presently the three found themselves discussing the local fisheries question on terms of cordial intimacy.

Of Sinker Hotchkiss therefore, finding him at the boat-house on their return from across the pond, the two boys made inquiry as to the yellow pony and village cart. Sinker recognized the equipage at once. “Why,” said he, “that b’longs to Commydore Challis, the same one ’t owns this boat-house.”

And then, being questioned further, he went on

with his information. Commodore Challis was an old sailor, a retired naval officer, who lived up at the village. That is, he lived there summers; the family spent their winters in Washington. The family consisted (since his wife died, two years before) of a daughter and a granddaughter—with a housekeeper and several servants. The daughter was quite a young lady now, a mighty handsome girl, with eyes black as coal. She didn't always drive that yellow pony; she sometimes rode—horseback—a horse four times as big and that went like a locomotive. They live just down the main street of the village, a short distance from the Common, in a Green Ann house. You'd be sure to know it; 'twas the stylistest house in town. The Challises were rich as all Boston.

All this, certainly, sounded very attractive. Tristram declared himself quite satisfied with the account. "They seem to be a perfectly respectable family," he said to Johnnie. "I see no reason why we should not go and make their acquaintance. Indeed, I think we'll go directly

after dinner. Rom may come back before we get a chance to hunt him up."

About half-past three, therefore, duly arrayed in clothes of fashionable cut, and hats with very large crowns, and collars of awful height (taking themselves very seriously, now, after the manner of city youths in the country), the two lads turned their steps toward the village to look up their lost dog. The plan was to go to the house, ask to see the young lady, and then, of her, inquire for the dog. If Miss Challis were not at home, they would wait and go again. It was she, after all, whom they had chiefly in mind — or whom Tristram had chiefly in mind — in making the call. The more he thought of Rom's abduction, the more he felt that it *must* be a jest on the part of the young lady; and he found himself, in that view, rather rejoicing at the affair, since it gave him an excuse for seeking her out, apologizing more satisfactorily for his awkwardness of the morning, and (no doubt) laying the foundations of a very delightful acquaintance.

Crossing the village green — a pretty, open

space irregularly planted with elm trees, with a band-stand in its centre and the various public buildings of the place, the two churches, the two rival grocery stores, the post-office, schoolhouse and brick bank, picturesquely arranged about its circumference—a short walk down a broad, shady street brought them opposite to the house which Sinker Hotchkiss had described. They looked across at it with a deepened sense of the wealth and importance of the people they were going to see. The grounds were spacious, and beautifully furnished and kept; the house itself (there was nothing “Queen Anne” about it except that its architecture was of the ornamental order) was an elegant specimen of modern country residence, its lower story of stone surrounded by piazzas and grown over with vines and shrubs, its upper portion, of wood, built up into all sorts of quaint balconies and windows and turrets, and half hidden among the branches of trees—the whole structure appearing to our two young gentlemen (though they were accustomed to fine houses) like some enchanted palace in a wood.

"It's a mighty swell place, isn't it?" Johnnie remarked, with some appearance of awe.

"Yes," laughed Tristram. "You wouldn't think that people who lived in a house like that would steal a dog."

"I don't believe I'll go in with you," said Johnnie. "I'll wait here." Johnnie, all along, had taken a more tragic view of the adventure than Tristram was disposed to allow himself.

"O, pshaw! Come along."

"No; I'll wait here."

So Tristram entered the gate and walked up the broad driveway alone. He was struck more than ever, now, with the beauties of the place. The lawn was perfect; curious foreign trees and rare plants were scattered all about; there was a Chinese pagoda, a miniature fish-pond, a wonderful grotto of stones; and the lad noted with special pleasure a tennis court carefully marked off with a lawn mower upon the grass. "So she plays tennis, does she?" he murmured to himself. "Strangely enough, so do I. We'll have some games together."

Going up the steps of a broad piazza hung with awnings, he suddenly found himself face to face with a human being, a stranger, of course, yet one who he at once recognized as the proprietor of the place. This was a distinguished-looking old gentleman with a ruddy face and white "mutton-chop" whiskers, whose portly figure, clad in a military coat, was extended upon a wicker chair made somewhat after the manner of a steamer-chair, and with a huge hood, like a chaise-top, erected over its main part. He had upon his head a queer little skull cap. He did not move, but seemed to glare at the newcomer from beneath his bushy eyebrows with an air of hostile inquiry. But Tristram, stepping nearer to address him, perceived all at once that, though his eyes were not closed, he was fast asleep. Indeed there was not wanting also, as he stood above him, auricular demonstration of the fact. "Ah," thought he, "the Commodore, no doubt — on the retired list. I'm sure I've no wish to disturb his slumbers. I don't believe in waking people up." And he turned softly toward the door.

A servant appeared presently in answer to his cautious pull of the bell, a stout, wholesome-looking Irish girl, who, with her hand upon the latch, defensively eyed him through the screen door.

"Well, what is it that's wanted?" she asked him in tones that seemed to him at the moment preternaturally loud.

Tristram raised his hand imploringly. "My good woman," said he, "pray modulate your voice a little. You'll wake this gentleman from his nap."

"Wake him, is it?" cried the girl. "Well, then, there's no fear of that. It's much as we can do to make him hear when he's broad awake already."

"O," said Tristram, with a relieved glance at the sleeper. "He's deaf, is he?"

"Indeed he is, then. One of his own cannons wouldn't wake him."

"Is Miss Challis at home?" inquired Tristram.

"Maybe she is and maybe she isn't," was the non-committing answer. "Are you the N-sickle-pedy man?"

"The *what*-man?" asked Tristram puzzled.

"The N-sickle-pedy man — the man to sell the

books. Because if ye are, Miss Helen told me to say she didn't want nothing at all of ye."

"O," laughed Tristram, comprehending. "No, I am *not* the encyclopædia man. I wish to see Miss Challis. Be so good as to give her this card."

The girl opened the door now, and taking the card carefully studied it for a moment. Then, "What's that?" she asked, pointing with suspicious finger, to the address in the corner. "Is that where ye make the books?"

"My good woman," said Tristram, with undiminished suavity, "permit me once more to correct the painful misconception under which you seem to labor. I don't make books; I don't sell books; I only, occasionally, buy them and read them."

"At any rate," said the girl, with a touch of good-humored irony, "ye talk like a book. Well, I'll give her the card and tell her the book-man is waiting."

"Tell her anything you please," answered Tristram resignedly. "Only give it to her. Or—let me have it one moment." He took the card again and added, in pencil, the word "Providence"

to the address. Whatever the girl might tell her, the card, thus amended, could hardly fail to impress Miss Challis with a proper sense of his importance. Providence, as every one knew, was a wealthy and aristocratic city; and Hope street (if she knew anything of its localities) was one of the best streets to live on. "There," he said, "give *that* to Miss Challis."

Then, since he was now permitted, he stepped inside and sat down upon the hall settee, while the girl went up stairs. The hall was a comfortable apartment with hard wood floor, amply furnished, with a fireplace and andirons to one side, and just within the fender — rather a novel ornament — a small yacht's cannon looking ready to go off at any moment. On the wall hung a large portrait of a naval officer in full uniform, with a sword across his knees — presumably that of the slumberer outside in his more heroic days. On the table under this portrait Tristram noted with interest a lady's tennis racket in its embroidered case. "Ah," he murmured, "we'll get to the subject of tennis as soon as possible."

CHAPTER IV.

AN ENCOUNTER WITH AN ICEBERG.

THE young lady, it would seem, was not so impressed by the information to be derived from Tristram's card as to mind keeping him waiting. It was fully ten minutes by the hall clock before she came down. She was dressed to go out, and seemed hardly to be thinking of him at all as she paused at the foot of the stair. Tristram rose to meet her. His eyeglasses (which might otherwise have identified him) were in his hand as he made his bow and, in his changed dress, he saw that she did not recognize him. She held his card in her hand and her glance passed from it to him with an air of the slightest possible interest. He felt that she still connected him in some way with the book business.

"I trust you will excuse this intrusion, Miss

Challis," he began. He knew that it sounded presuming, at the outset, thus to call her by name; but it seemed necessary to call her something, and plain "Miss" would not have done at all. "I called upon an errand—that is, upon a little matter of—business"—Then he stopped short. Somehow or other it was hard for him to do himself justice in the presence of this young lady.

Miss Challis's dark eyes rested upon him coldly. "Business?" said she, and again glanced at his card.

Tristram bit his lip. "I think you misunderstand," he said. "My business has nothing to do with books. I came to say to you—to ask you"—he stumbled again. Then, quite out of patience with himself, he went bluntly to the point. "The fact is, Miss Challis, I owe you an apology."

"An apology?" The black eyebrows arched themselves slightly. "I think not. You wish to see me?"

"Yes; I am Mr. Tuckerman of Providence."

"Yes?" The announcement of his name and place of residence seemed not to produce quite

its due effect upon her even when made by Mr. Tuckerman of Providence himself. She did, however, now ask him to be seated, motioning toward the settee.

"Thank you," said Tristram. "Won't you sit down yourself?" And he drew forward a chair. But as she took no notice, he also remained standing. She should see that he understood good manners.

"Yes," he went on, "I am out here camping with a friend. We were out fishing this morning, over the other side of the pond; and I was coming across a cornfield, near the road" —

"Ah!" interrupted the young lady, and regarded him with sudden attention. "Then you were the — person — whom we saw in the cornfield." She spoke the words slowly, as though she were gradually realizing, as she uttered them, the fact which they expressed. Then, all in an instant, she drew herself up, as cold and stately as an iceberg. Tristram felt a chill creep over him. This promised to be as bad, in its way, as the scorching he had received in the morning.

He went on, however. "Yes, I am that person. And I wanted to say to you that I did it out of pure thoughtlessness; and that I — I — Well, I just made a goose of myself." He laughed ruefully.

The young lady stiffly inclined her head, perhaps by way of assent to this statement.

"And I wish to apologize," said Tristram.

"I do not see why you should apologize to me for — those were your words, I believe — 'making a goose of yourself'," observed Miss Challis freezingly.

"But you'll forgive me?"

"Certainly — if you can forgive yourself." Her manner, however, was to the last degree unforgiving.

"I know it had a bad look; but I assure you" —

"It is not of the slightest consequence."

"But you accept my apology?" Tristram felt that he was eating a good deal of humble pie; but he was really very anxious to set himself right with her.

"Certainly. I accept your apology. Is that

all?" She drew back a little and seemed to wait for him to go.

But Tristram did not go. He declined to be frozen out in this manner. He had come there, with the best intentions in the world, and apologized like a gentleman; and it was not fair to treat him like this. He felt his blood begin to boil in spite of the chilliness of the atmosphere.

"No," said he, "that is not all. I fear I must detain you a moment longer." He spoke very politely, but he had suddenly quite discarded his tone of apology. "There is something else. I came to ask you, also, to return to me my dog, if you are done with him." He had no difficulty now in coming to the point. Personating a scarecrow was not so heinous a crime as stealing a dog, after all.

Miss Challis looked at him haughtily. "Your dog?" said she, "I don't understand you."

"I mean," said Tristram, "the dog you met in the road this morning, and took into your village cart. As he hasn't come back, I presume he is still in your possession."

Miss Challis's eyes rested upon him, at these words, with a slight look of surprise. "So it was *you* the dog was with?" she murmured, as much to herself as to her caller. Evidently, until this moment, she had not connected him with the dog. "Still in my possession?" she repeated. "Of course he is still in my possession! And I mean that he shall remain there."

"Mean that he shall remain there!—in your possession!" Tristram was aware that it was not good manners to take the words out of people's mouths; but for that matter the young lady herself had just been guilty of the same offence. He smiled grimly. "I'm very much obliged to you; but as he and I are rather fond of each other I think, with your permission, I'll keep him in my own possession."

"I don't know just what it is you are trying to make out," she said, "or just what you wish me to believe. I simply know that the dog I met in the road this morning was my own dog. He was stolen from me, last April, just after we came back here. I don't know how you came by him.

If you bought him of anybody " — Miss Challis, clearly, had her doubts as to this, though she did not say so — " then you have been imposed upon."

Tristram listened to this speech with amazement. Had the girl taken a fancy to Rom and, having gotten him into her possession, did she mean to keep him, in spite of anything that he (Tristram) could say or do, under pretense of having lost him? Or had she really lost a dog — one something like Rom — and believed now that she had found him again? This last seemed hardly possible; and yet as he looked at her, Tristram felt that it must be so. This young lady was not joking; she was not pretending; she honestly believed that Rom was her own dog, and (very likely) that it was Tristram himself who had stolen him from her. It was a curious mistake to make; but she had made it.

Tristram laughed pleasantly. "O," said he, "I see how it is. You're mistaken in the dog."

"Mistaken in the dog! How can I be?"

"Why, my dog, probably, looks so much like yours that you've been deceived by the resem-

blance. These Gordon Setters often look alike. They're all from the same stock, you know, if they're thoroughbred. And not having seen your dog for two months or so, when mine came along you naturally mistook him for yours."

"Mistook him!" exclaimed the young lady very scornfully. "Do you think I don't know my own dog? And he knew *me*, instantly; and was overjoyed to see me."

"O," said Tristram indulgently, "he knows everybody instantly and is overjoyed to see them."

"Do you mean that he would treat me just like other people?" Miss Challis was quite indignant. "I am sure that he would not!" Then the slight warmth into which, for a moment, she had been betrayed suddenly died out, and she relapsed into her former iciness of manner. "However," she said, "it is of no use discussing the matter. Of course, I know my own dog."

"But," Tristram remonstrated, "you must admit also that *I* know *my* own dog; and, under the circumstances, it is only fair to suppose that it is you and not I that is mistaken. Unless," he sud-

denly added, looking straight at her, "you assume that I am an impostor."

Miss Challis coldly returned his glance, as directly as it was given, and made no reply. She evidently had no intention of disclaiming the assumption.

"But," declared Tristram, not a little nettled, "I can easily prove what I say — if you insist on my proving it."

"I don't insist on your proving it. I don't *wish* you to prove it."

"But I've had my dog over a year; and you say you only lost yours in April. My friend who is with me will tell you the same thing, if you don't believe me."

"I haven't the least doubt of it."

"Oh! but — excuse me — this is folly," said Tristram, fairly provoked. "I could readily prove by any number of persons, if I had them here, that the dog is mine."

"Yes? And I can readily prove by any number of persons — and I *have* them here — that the dog is mine. We all knew him instantly."

“Yes,” protested Tristram, “but you are *mis-taken in the dog*. This dog was in my possession before you lost yours. I can prove *that*.”

“You can’t prove it if it isn’t so,” replied the young lady with cogence.

Tristram groaned in spirit. Where was the use in reasoning with such a person as this? She believed the dog was hers and she was determined to keep on believing it. Then he bethought himself of another point.

“Ah! I’ll tell you how I can convince you. I have the dog’s license at home — the old one, made out a year ago. It has his number in it — One Thousand Seven — the same that’s on his collar, now. I’ll send for it.” He advanced this argument with tranquil confidence; it was of the nature of documentary evidence.

But the young lady met it promptly. “Thank you,” said she, “but I won’t trouble you. I have a license right here in the house that will do just as well. It was taken out a year ago just like yours, and has his number in it, too — Number Twenty-One — the same that was on his collar

when he was stolen." She calmly regarded him as though she thought her argument, like her license, just as good as his own, which perhaps it was. Then she added, by way of additional evidence, "And his name, Remus — *that* was on his collar, too — he remembered it perfectly well, and he comes instantly when I call him by it."

"Remus!" Tristram opened his eyes. "Was your dog's name Remus?" he asked. "Well, that's a queer coincidence! It's no wonder Rom answered to it. Romulus and Remus. That's very queer. My dog's name is Romulus."

Miss Challis bowed. "I don't see anything queer about it," said she coolly. "It was a very easy thing to do, to change Remus to Romulus. Of course the one name suggests the other." And Tristram perceived that she actually regarded the similarity of the names as so much further evidence against him.

He looked helplessly about him wondering what he should say next. It seemed useless to argue the matter longer; every argument he had used had only made matters worse. The young lady

was not open to argument. Evidently she meant to keep the dog. But of course Tristram could not submit to that. The dog was his and he must have him; indeed, he did not mean to go away without him. And yet, how was he to get him. He did not even know where he was at that moment, and he could hardly go through the house searching for him. If he could only persuade the young lady to have him in.

“Miss Challis,” said he, as seriously as though Rom were a child whose guardianship was in dispute between them, “can I see the dog?”

“I don’t know what good that can do,” said Miss Challis. “Why do you wish to see him?”

“Well, I don’t seem able to convince you that he is mine; and of course you can’t convince me that he is yours. And why wouldn’t it be a good plan to—well, to leave it to the dog?” Tristram had not thought of this before, himself; but it struck him, as he proposed it, as being a very good plan indeed.

“Leave it to the dog?” said Miss Challis. “What do you mean?”

"Why, have him brought in here, and see which one of us he will acknowledge as master. What do you say to that?"

"I say that it is the most absurd and unreasonable proposition I ever heard of," returned the young lady with emphasis. "The dog hasn't seen me for two months and more, until to-day, while you have had him with you all that time. Of course he would acknowledge you."

Tristram laughed confusedly. This young lady was quite as quick at thinking as he was. She was not to be imposed upon.

"However," she suddenly continued, somewhat to his surprise, seeming to give the matter a second thought, "I don't know, after all, that I've any objection to trying it, just to see what he will do." Her face kindled a little as she considered the scheme. "Yes," she concluded, with decision, "I will! Wait a moment." And before he well realized her intention, she had swiftly passed him and vanished by a door in the rear.

Tristram sat and waited with somewhat recovered spirits. It would be something to have the

dog in—indeed, it would be everything. Once let him get Rom into his hands and he would not let him go again, even if he had to take him away violently. Violence would be quite justifiable in dealing with such a young lady as this, who had taken the dog by force, herself, in the first place, and who meant to keep him by force if she could, and who had treated him (Tristram himself) with such coldness and (he considered) discourtesy. Why, he had never had such a freezing reception in all his life. Talk about Dr. Kane's Farthest North! He felt as though he had been to the Pole itself. The young lady was a regular iceberg. "The next time I come to see *her*," said Mr. Tuckerman of Providence to himself, "I'll wear my seal gloves and ulster overcoat."

CHAPTER V.

ROMULUS AUT REMUS?



MISS CHALLIS was gone some minutes—long enough, Tristram instantly realized as she came in again, to have produced a complete and very agreeable change in her manner. It no longer exhibited that extreme of Arctic cold which, just now, he had been compelled to endure; nor was it characterized, either, by the fierce, torrid heat from which he had suffered in the morning; it was simply temperate, now—warm, fresh, exhilarating, delightful. Tristram felt the change as he would have felt the change from one zone to another. He quickly forgave her all her sins past, and reflected (with his eye again on the tennis racket) that after all she would

be an extremely nice girl to know, if only one were on good terms with her.

She was full now of the proposed scheme. "I've arranged it all," she vivaciously informed him. "Mollie is to bring him to the door; and when I tell her, she will open it and let him in. You are to sit there, on the settee; and I will sit over here. And then, the one he goes to first, that one is his master. Will that do?" She confronted him brightly.

Tristram smilingly declared that it would do capitally. Almost anything would do, he thought, if she would only look at him and talk to him like that. He could well nigh have made her a present of the dog on the spot.

"Of course," she naively observed, "if he should go to *you* first, it wouldn't really prove anything, when he has been with you so long. But I don't believe he *will* go to you."

And even to this Tristram did not demur. He felt very sure, for that matter, that Rom would come straight to himself, not having seen him since morning; and, at any rate, he did not wish

to say anything that might upset the experiment or disturb again the young lady's temper. He was quite content with things as they were going.

There was a knock at the door and, at the same time, a vigorous scratching at the threshold. "Sit down, quick!" Miss Challis eagerly commanded him; and as she now sat down herself he had no hesitation in complying. "Mind, now, not a word or sign to influence him," she warned him with her finger. Then she raised her voice to Mollie. "Now, Mollie, let him in." The next instant the door opened and Rom appeared.

The two contestants in this novel combat sat exactly opposite to each other, one on either side the hall, so far apart that the dog must perforce choose between them. To whom would he go? There was perfect stillness in the hall while for one short second of time he seemed to poise himself, realizing perhaps the presence of both. Then he sprang eagerly forward and, without a particle of swerving or hesitation, exactly as though there had been but one person there, he went straight to — the young lady. He threw himself headlong

upon her lap and began licking her hands and exhibiting every possible evidence of love and affection, while on the settee opposite, his lawful master, he who had tended him and petted him and sacrificed for him all his life long, sat chagrined and disgusted, quite left out in the cold.

Miss Challis took the dog's muzzle in both her hands and fondly kissed it. Then raising her head and looking over at our hero, she suddenly burst out laughing — laughter hearty, unrestrained, ungenerous perhaps; but such gleeful, musical, entirely ladylike laughter that, even in this moment of his sore discomfiture, Tristram felt it to be delightful to hear. He could but look back at her and laugh too.

"Well, sir," she cried, "what do you think now about your dog?"

"I think," was the exasperated answer, "that he's an ungrateful whelp. Romulus, come here!"

"Remus," said the young lady, "stay where you are."

Rom looked around at Tristram and wagged his tail. But he stayed where he was.

“Ha, ha, ha,” laughed Miss Challis. “You see he has chosen between us. I’m very sorry for you ; but I’m very glad to get him back.”

“I don’t know what’s got into him,” declared Tristram, a good deal provoked. “I acknowledge your superior attractions, of course ; but I didn’t suppose he would treat me like this.” He cast a reproachful glance at the dog ; and at the same moment he caught sight of a small object — a bit of cracker — lying on the floor. He started up. “O, I say, but I do know — what’s got into him. I should like to know, Miss Challis, if you call that fair ?” He looked injured and indignant.

“Call what fair ? What do you mean ?” asked the young lady, getting up also. Her tone and manner was that of artless innocence ; but alas ! the color in her cheek was, unquestionably, the flush of conscious guilt.

“*That!*” Tristram pointed with accusing finger to where, right at her feet, lay the piece of cracker. Rom at that instant discovered it too and quickly removed it from sight. But it had told its tale. The dog’s decision had been made sure of before-

hand. Miss Challis had given him a bit of Buffalo biscuit (of which dainty he was greedily fond) while she was out of the room; and the instant he was admitted he had gone straight to her for more. Her duplicity stood confessed.

“So that is the way you settle the matter, is it?” cried Tristram, in accents of withering irony. “I congratulate you, Miss Challis, upon the conquest of my dog’s affections. You are quite sure to retain them — so long as you have plenty of Buffalo biscuit.”

But Miss Challis did not appear at all withered. Nor did she propose, either, it would seem, to be scolded for anything she saw fit to do. She drew herself haughtily up; her face turned red as fire; and all at once Tristram saw before him once more the young lady of the cornfield. He bit his lip and wished that he had shown mercy instead of justice. He might have known that he could not keep the advantage of her by force.

“I am sorry,” she said, “that you are dissatisfied with the result of the test you yourself proposed. But I cannot help it. As for the Buffalo

biscuit, please understand, sir, that I shall give my dog Buffalo biscuit whenever and wherever I like, without permission of anybody."

Tristram bowed, not finding himself supplied, at the moment, with any answer to this. Indeed he felt now that there was very little more to be said on the subject anyway; and it occurred to him that he had better end the interview forthwith, before the young lady herself should do so.

"Miss Challis," he said, summoning all his sub-Freshman dignity, "it is useless, I see, to prolong this conversation. You are determined not to listen to reason. If you'll excuse me, I will take my leave. Come, Rom." He snapped his fingers to Romulus.

"I will excuse you, sir, with pleasure," Miss Challis replied. "But you will leave me my dog if you please."

Tristram compressed his lips. "Miss Challis," said he, "I have already told you several times that the dog is not yours, but mine. I can easily prove the fact, even to *your* satisfaction, within

twenty-four hours. Meanwhile I must take him with me."

"Indeed you must not, sir!" cried the young lady with flashing eyes.

"I bid you good day." Tristram bowed again. "Romulus, here, sir!"

Rom, knowing well the tone in which his master now spoke, came obediently to his side and the two moved toward the door.

"Stop, sir!" commanded the young lady, stamping her foot. "I do not mean you, sir," she said to Tristram as he turned back, "I mean *him*. Remus, come here!" Then, as the dog declined to mind, she suddenly raised her voice to the pitch of alarm. "Mollie! Mollie!"

The door in the rear opened instantly and Mollie, who had perhaps been expecting the summons, promptly made her reappearance upon the scene.

"Mollie," directed her mistress, "take Remus back to the kitchen. Take right hold of his collar and carry him out."

Mollie seemed perfectly to comprehend the situ-

ation. She advanced without hesitation and laid hold of Rom's collar. Tristram, with forced calmness, ordered her to let go again.

"Let go, is it?" The girl raised her shrill voice to such a key as might have insured its being heard through the entire village. "An' sure, who are you that takes it upon yerself to give orders in this house?"

Tristram winced and drew back. A broil with a noisy servant was not at all what he was prepared for. But then, seeing her actually about to drag Rom away, he too laid hold of the dog's collar. It was a desperate moment. For all he knew, if he let him go now he might never see him again. Then Mollie began pulling vigorously; whereupon our hero (a poor hero he certainly appeared at this moment) found himself obliged to pull too, to maintain his ground; while the unfortunate subject of dispute, thus drawn in two directions, began to howl most distressingly. The scene, however tragic it may have seemed to those engaged it, was in truth fast becoming ridiculous.

Miss Challis, standing by, angrily clapped her hands together. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself," she cried to Tristram. "Let go of the dog this instant! What right have you to come here and behave in this way?"

"I have a right to my dog," declared Tristram breathlessly.

"It is *not* your dog! Let him go, I say, or I will call my father. Mollie, step to the door and speak to the Commodore."

Tristram at this let go his hold and stood up. It was folly, of course, making a scene in this way and he now realized it. "Oh! if you're going to call in the United States Navy," said he.

"Mollie," Miss Challis again commanded, "take the dog out, at once."

And so poor Tristram stood there, very angry, but not seeing what he could do to help himself, and saw his beloved dog dragged away a prisoner out of his sight.

"This is all perfectly unreasonable and absurd!" he said to Miss Challis.

"I quite agree with you, sir," she answered.



IT WAS A DESPERATE MOMENT.

"I do not see that there is anything left for you to do but to *go*."

And Tristram, finding himself also able to agree in this instance, turned and went out the door, painfully aware that he was making a far from glorious retreat.

Miss Jemima (if that *was* her name; she did not look it) was just driving around from the stable in the yellow village cart as he went down the steps. Tristram felt it in his bones that she was laughing at him as he strode past her; and was it a creation of his excited fancy, or did he really hear her calling softly after him, "Good-by, Mr. Scarecrow?"

Johnnie was impatiently waiting for him at the gate. "I hope you've been gone long enough," said he.

To this Tristram vouchsafed no reply.

"Where's Rom? Haven't you got him?"

"You don't see him anywhere about me, do you?" answered Tristram savagely.

"Didn't they have the dog?" asked Johnnie.

"Yes; they had him."

"Then where is he?"

"I left him with them," said Tristram curtly. "The young lady is going to keep him for me for a while."

"Oh!" Johnnie studied his comrade's face. "You don't seem to have enjoyed your call," said he.

"No; I didn't. The climate didn't agree with me. It was too changeable; gave me chills and fever."

"How did you like the girl?"

"How did I like her? I don't think I got as far as liking her."

"What did she say?"

"I don't think I could repeat all that she said."

And these and such as these were the only answers Johnnie could get to his questions.

But of course Tristram told him the whole story later. And Johnnie in his clumsy way sought to comfort him; but he would not be comforted. He expected to get the dog back again; certainly he expected to get him back; but he was worried about the matter nevertheless, and he went to bed feeling thoroughly blue and miserable.

But hours after that, in the dark watches of the night, as he lay upon his cot, he suddenly heard a light step upon the boat-house floor and then something cold touched his cheek. He knew what it was instantly. He threw out his arms and clasped the dog to his breast.

“Rom, old boy, I knew you’d come back! Bless your faithful old heart! Good fellow! Good fellow! Let me see the man, woman, young lady or servant-girl that will take you from me again!”

And all night long, as he slept, his hand clutched firmly the dog’s shaggy mane.

CHAPTER VI.

A MORNING RECEPTION.

BREAKFAST was just over, the next morning, at the Hotel Thoreau. In good weather the boys took their meals out of doors, from a table built beneath the trees. They were just clearing things away; that is, Tristram was clearing away the dishes and Johnnie the fragments of the breakfast. It was hard for Johnnie to leave off eating so long as there was anything to eat. He was just taking from the plate a large segment of apple pie that had been left, when Tristram interfered.

"Lovey," said he, "I've no objection to your eating pie for breakfast, if you will do it. Emerson himself, we are told, eat pie for breakfast. But I do object to your eating it just to get rid of it. That pie is too good to be wasted, if I do say it. Here, if it must be eaten, Rom and I will

help you." He took the pie and cut it into three pieces. "There!" said he. "There you have it, like Gaul, divided into three parts. '*Omnis Gallia in tres partes divisa est.*'" And taking one piece himself, he gave the remaining two, one to Johnnie and one to Romulus, each of whom received with eagerness his allotted share.

Presently a crashing in the bushes was heard as of some one approaching; and the boys, looking up, caught sight through the leaves of a blue coat and panama hat.

"Whose coming now, I wonder," exclaimed Johnnie. "It must be the Chief of Police."

"No," said Tristram, instantly surmising who it was, "it's Commodore Challis. And he's come for Rom, too, as sure as a shot-gun!"

He hurriedly seized Rom by the collar and looked around. His first thought was to take him into the boat-house; but there was hardly time for that. Close at hand, spread open to dry in the sun, was a good-sized box, fitted with a cover and with holes bored in its sides, which was used for an ice-chest. Quick as thought he lifted Rom

off his legs and thrust him into this box, shutting down the lid and drawing the leathern hasp over its nail. Then he turned calmly to meet the new comer.

The Commodore was just coming into full view. He halted in the open space and shook himself vigorously, looking down at his white trousers.

"It's a wonder there is anything left of 'em!" he declared. "Those abominable brambles! I thought I should never get out."

Tristram now advanced to meet him. "Good-morning, sir," said he in his very politest tones. "I'm afraid you have suffered from the brambles. You must have strayed from the path."

"Eh?" uttered the old gentleman, looking up and scowling.

Then Tristram remembered that he was deaf, and raised his voice accordingly. "You seem to have suffered from the brambles," he repeated.

"Suffered! I should think I had! I'm so scratched and torn and stuck full of thorns, I'm a fit subject for the ship's surgeon."

"I'm very sorry, sir," said Tristram sympathet-

ically. "Won't you come and sit down?" He turned toward where, beneath a big pine-tree, a hammock was swung, with some camp-chairs standing near. "We *must* keep him away from the ice-box, Lovey," he added, *sotto voce*, to Johnnie, who, although he had not spoken a word, was solemnly assisting at the reception by his presence.

"Humph!" The old gentleman grimly looked about him, paying no attention whatever to Tristram's invitation. "You seem to be making yourselves at home here," he gruffly observed. "Perhaps you're not aware that this land and the boat-house yonder belong to me."

This, certainly, was not very gracious; but it may as well be acknowledged, once for all, that the Commodore was an exceedingly irascible, ill-tempered old seaman who rarely felt called upon to be gracious to anybody. He was old; he was afflicted with gout; and he had met with a disappointment just at the close of his professional career which had greatly soured him. Only a few days before the period for his retirement from active service (the age of sixty-two) he had been

recommended for promotion to the rank of Rear Admiral; but Congress, for some reason, had failed to act on the matter within the prescribed time and the poor old officer had gone on the retired list simply as Commodore, an injustice he could never forgive or be reconciled to. People said he had never spoken a pleasant word since, which assertion, although no doubt exaggerated, will not be violently contradicted by such of his discourse as is found recorded in these pages.

"Yes," Tristram said to him now with an air of apology. "We understood that it was yours. But the boat-house didn't look as though anybody ever used it; and we liked the place; and we didn't see any harm" —

"However," the old gentleman grumbled on, still not much minding our hero, "it doesn't matter. I'm told it's a habit of yours, appropriating other people's property." Then, all at once, "What have you done with my daughter's dog?" he abruptly demanded.

This question, although not unexpected on the part of the boys, was found by them, naturally

enough, a little confusing. Johnnie turned his back upon it completely and began kicking diligently at a bit of stump in the soil; but Tristram felt obliged to face it.

“Sir,” said he, willing to gain a moment’s time, “I don’t understand.”

“What — have — you — done — with — my — daughter’s — dog?” shouted the Commodore, raising his gold-headed cane and pounding out each word with it as if it had been a hammer.

“Has you daughter lost her dog, sir?” asked Tristram, retreating a little.

“Lost her dog!” thundered the Commodore. “*No, sir!* She hasn’t lost her dog. She has had her dog stolen. Do you mean to tell me that you didn’t know it, sir? Do you mean to say that you didn’t come to my house last night, sir — in the middle of the night — when we were all asleep in our beds — and steal him away? What, sir? What? Don’t you dare deny it!” Again he raised his cane and slowly shook it, like a huge index finger, at our hero. “Don’t you *dare* deny it, sir! I will take no denials. Denials won’t

go down with me, sir. I am too old a sailor." He glared at the lad as though he were some mutinous culprit summoned to his quarter-deck, whom he meant to hang at the yard-arm the next minute. He had worked himself, in a very short space of time, into a perfect tempest of passion.

Tristram bent a moment before the blast, but quickly recovered himself. He looked around at Johnnie who, in serious alarm, was edging away to the rear. "Lovey, you beggar," said he, "don't desert me. He'll blow me out of water." Then he addressed himself to the irate old gentleman. "Nevertheless, my dear sir," he protested, "you must permit me to deny what you have just said. We did not come to your house last night, when you where all in bed, and steal away any dog. We were all in bed ourselves, sir. As for the dog" —

But here, all at once, the storm burst upon him again with redoubled fury.

"You didn't, sir? You didn't?" roared the Commodore. "You dare deny it to my face! What do you mean, sir?" Again the cane quiv-

ered in mid-air. "I tell you I will take no denial. I know you, both of you. You can't impose upon *me!*"

He paused for breath and there was a moment's lull in the tempest. Tristram, keeping his "weather eye" upon his visitor did not forbear to make his remark to Johnnie. "The old Jupiter Tonans!" said he. "What right has he to come thundering around here in this way? He'll sour all the milk." It was not quite respectful, it must be admitted, thus to talk about a deaf person in his very presence; but the temptation, to a boy like Tristram, was irresistible.

"No, sir!" the old man went on, "you can't impose upon *me!* It was you, sir — *you* — that came to my house yesterday afternoon, and behaved most outrageously, and tried to take my daughter's dog away by force. You had stolen him in the first place, I suppose; and now you have stolen him again. And you've got him hidden away here somewhere, I've no doubt, this very moment. Give him up to me, sir, instantly; or I'll have you put in irons, both of you. I ex-

pect my daughter here with a constable, every minute."

"My good sir," Tristram began again, "you are entirely mistaken, I do assure you. The dog" — But there he was again interrupted.

"Mistaken am I?" cried the Commodore. "Bah! I'll have no more of this." He shook his head like an angry bull. "We'll *see* if I'm mistaken." He started forward, looking sharply to the right hand and to the left, moving directly toward the breakfast table. The two boys hastened after exchanging glances of dismay. The moment of discovery seemed certainly to have come. Even if the Commodore (who had no scruples, evidently, about the Right of Search) should fail to find the dog for himself, Rom was certain to announce the fact of his presence very shortly on his own behalf. He could scarcely be expected to keep quiet in the box much longer.

The old gentleman paused, however, close by the table, with an air of suddenly relinquishing his purpose. "After all," said he, in a tone and manner that were mild only by comparison with

those in which he had lately indulged, "I think I'll wait for Leach and let him make the search. *He'll* find out where you have hidden him precious quick. Meanwhile" — the cane reared itself in warning — "don't you dare to stir from this spot, either of you. I'll have none of your tricks."

"We've no intention of stirring from the spot so long as you yourself remain here," Tristram sincerely assured him.

"Very well. I'll sit down here and wait." He looked about for something to sit on. There was nothing at hand of the nature of a chair save the bench by the table and the ice-box close by it. Johnnie saw the danger and rushing forward began pulling frantically at the bench (it was quite immovable) as if to offer that. But he was too late. The Commodore walked straight to the box instead and heavily seated himself upon its cover. The instant he did so — Horror of horrors! — the dog (who had, no doubt, by this time found his quarters exceedingly uncomfortable) raised his voice from within and gave utterance to a prolonged howl.

The boys looked at each other, sorely dismayed and yet much put to it to keep from laughing, for the situation was very funny. "Bother the beast!" muttered Tristram. "He has let the cat out of the bag this time, I guess."

"Eh? What? What's that noise?" ejaculated the old gentleman, looking quickly about him. He had heard the sound, but, clearly, had no idea what it was or where it came from. "It sounded like a child crying," said he.

"I think it must be the Babes in the Wood," Tristram remarked, very anxious at the moment to remark something.

"Eh?" inquired the visitor.

"I think it must be the Babes in the Wood," shouted Tristram.

"Humph! It's very queer that there should be babies in the woods at this hour." He seemed to accept the fact, however. Then his glance fell upon the table. "So you're just through breakfast?" he observed, by way of conversation. "You appear to be making yourselves comfortable here. Everything shipshape and" —

But at that instant, from the box beneath him, there issued another howl, longer, louder, more dismal and dreadful than the last. The old gentleman jumped up from his seat.

“Bless my soul!” he exclaimed. “What *is* that? It’s the queerest noise I ever heard; it sounded as though it came from down in the bowels of the earth, somewhere.” He looked from one of the boys to the other in great wonder. Deaf as he was and being in bodily contact with the box itself, no doubt the noise had sounded strangely to him.

Johnnie, meeting his glance with some confusion, felt bound to supply an explanation. “Perhaps it’s an earthquake,” he suggested feebly.

“Eh? What?” asked the Commodore.

“My friend thinks that it may be an earthquake,” Tristram answered him, raising his voice to a quite unnecessary pitch. Something must be done to cover up the sounds from the box. Rom was indulging now in a series of low whines; he might break forth into a howl again at any moment. “Are earthquakes common in this vicin-

ity, sir? I never witnessed one, myself; I think I should rather enjoy it, even if it were a home-made one." It did not make much difference to Tristram what he said so long as he kept saying something. "But I don't think this can be an earthquake, really, sir," he added, "we should feel the shock."

"Earthquake? Nonsense!" growled the Commodore. "We don't have earthquakes in a civilized country like this."

"At any rate," Tristram hastened to continue (for the cries from the box began at that moment to multiply and deepen), "whatever it is, earthquake or no earthquake, it must not be allowed to interfere with the duties of the hour. You'll excuse us, sir, I am sure, if we go on with our work." He turned to the table with a sudden air of business. "Here, Lovey" — this of course in an undertone — "take hold and help make a noise with these dishes. Shake 'em up, my boy, for all their worth. We must drown out the dog somehow." And he began banging the plates about in the most reckless manner.

“You see, sir,” he rattled on meanwhile to his guest, speaking at his very loudest now in order to be heard above his own din, “housework, as the saying is, is never done. Or rather it never *would* be done if we allowed anything to interfere with it. So you’ll excuse us, as I say, if we keep right on. My friend and I, we rather enjoy this kind of work, you know. Eh, Lovey?” He looked over at Johnnie, making a comical half-face at him on the side that was farthest from the Commodore; whereupon Johnnie plunged his head violently into a huge mixing-pan that he had in his hands and from the sounds that issued therefrom one might have thought he was trying to drown himself in it.

“Yes,” Tristram went on, picking up a handful of knives and forks and throwing them into a dish-pan, “dish-washing is one of my special accomplishments. I learned it at a boarding-school I went to, down in Connecticut. Washing dishes was thoroughly taught there; in fact it was the only thing that was thoroughly taught. It was a required study. They kept us at it morning,

noon and night. I mastered the subject in just one week, and graduated from the institution, in the middle of the night by a back window. I've kept up my practice in dish-washing ever since ; and, as I say, my friend and I really enjoy it. We frequently sing over our work. Would you like to hear us sing, sir? By all means. Lovey, what shall it be? A song of the sea would, I think, be appropriate under the circumstances. What do you say to 'Three Times Round?' " And the absurd fellow threw back his head, without a particle of hesitation, and at the top of a voice not the less suited to his purpose because utterly devoid of sweetness and harmony, began to sing — a verse of a certain old sea song well known to all college students of these days :

Then up spake the cook of our gallant ship ;

And a jolly, fat cook was he.

I care far more for my kettles and my pots

Than I care for the depths of the sea.

O, the ocean waves may roll right along,

And the stormy winds may blow,

While we poor sailors go skipping through the tops,

And the land-lubbers lying down below, below, below,

And the land-lubbers lying down below.

He finished the chorus in fine style — Johnnie joining in, somewhat ineffectively, at the last — and then looked up at the Commodore. “How is that, sir?” he gravely inquired. “Doesn’t that take you back to your sea-faring days?”

The Commodore frowned. He had been watching the actions of the boys for some time with a good deal of suspicion. “It strikes me, young gentlemen” — said he.

And there he was once more cut short. Rom, who during the singing had been perfectly quiet, had the instant it seemed certainly to have ceased, again seen fit to deliver himself of a howl, this time eclipsing all former efforts.

Tristram was in despair. “Lovey, Lovey,” he exclaimed, “what in the name of the Nine Muses shall we do next? Can’t you cry, or speak a piece, or get up on the table and dance, or something? I’m about out of noise, myself. Ah! I have it! Quick, quick! *Your concertina!* Run and get it. It’s our last resort. Mean it? Of course I mean it!” This in answer to a wondering look from his friend. “We *must* make a

racket, somehow. Perhaps we'll drive the old gentleman crazy if we don't drown out the dog."

Then, while Johnnie hurried to the boat-house for his beloved concertina (he had put it into his trunk in spite of Tristram's command the day of starting, but he had never been allowed to take it out until this moment), Tristram again sought to occupy the attention of the Commodore. The sounds from the box had once more subsided into low whining.

"My friend Lovering," said he — always shouting, of course — "although not a remarkable person ordinarily, has one great natural gift. He's a born concertina player. He takes to it as naturally as you and I would to a hand-organ. He's a greater wonder, in his way, than Blind Tom or the Cowboy Pianist. I want you to hear him. It'll be a revelation to you, a musical treat, something to remember as long as you live. Ah, Lovey, here you are. I've been telling the Commodore about your playing. He's anxious to hear you. Sit down there and give us a verse or two of 'Home, Sweet Home.'" This, as Tristram

well knew, was Johnnie's only tune. "You must hear him play 'Home, Sweet Home,' sir. His rendering of it is perfectly astonishing. It'll make you homesick, sir." And he added fervently in a lower key, "I only wish it might!"

So Johnnie — entirely sober now, for concertina playing was serious business to him — sat down on the bench and fitting the instrument to his hands began slowly pulling it out and pushing it in, laboriously manipulating its keys at the same time and producing a series of melancholy sounds which, although a good deal disconnected and discordant, were still fairly recognizable as making up the tune Tristram had named. The two listeners meanwhile stood by, Tristram in an attitude of profoundest admiration, the Commodore with an expression of growing bewilderment. No doubt, as Tristram had promised, he found himself vastly astonished by the performance. At this moment, too, Romulus (to whom also, possibly, the music was a revelation) suddenly asserted himself once more, giving vent, this time, in place of a howl, to a series of sharp, penetrat-

ing yelps quite unmistakable in their character even to the Commodore's obscured sense. The old gentleman knew now that a dog — *the* dog, of course — was somewhere close at hand, though just where he was still undetermined. He began at once to storm and shout, brandishing his cane and stamping upon the ground, in a fine fury at the deception that had been practiced and the treatment he had received. Johnnie at the same instant, panic stricken, quite lost his way even among the familiar ways of "Sweet Home" and fell to wildly pulling his concertina in and out, producing a far more noisy and terrible discord. And Tristram too, still blandly seeking to mend matters, added his voice to the tumult. Pandemonium for the moment reigned supreme. And the scene, to an outside observer, must have looked a strange one.

And observers it had, as it happened, three of them, who just at the moment of its climax had driven into the open space. These were Miss Challis, Jemima, and a third person — Mr. Leach, the constable — in a light democrat wagon. Miss

Challis, who held the reins, drove straight forward and drew up her horse right among the excited group by the table. Instantly of course the clamor ceased. Even Rom grew silent, hearing the sound of wheels.

Tristram was the first to speak. As the reader knows, it rarely took him long to find his tongue.

"We are having an open air concert," he gravely explained, lifting his hat and addressing himself especially to Miss Challis.

"Are you indeed?" that young lady responded, looking down at him not ill-naturedly from her seat in the wagon. "Pray don't let us interrupt the performance."

"Oh!" said Tristram, "we had about got to the end of our programme." He glanced oddly at Johnnie who had retreated a few steps into the background and who stood now, fearfully eyeing the young lady, with his concertina held, like a huge blunderbus, before him.

The Commodore here came forward. He had not got to the end of *his* programme.

"Leach," said he to the constable, "look around

here, will you, and see where these young rascals have hidden that dog? He's close by here, somewhere ; I've heard him ; but I'll be keelhauled if I know just where."

At this point still another participant in the recent "concert" showed a disposition to renew the performance. From the ice-box a few feet away there arose a woful howl. Romulus was as determined as ever not to be forgotten by the outside world. To everybody present save the Commodore the sound was perfectly distinct and the place from which it proceeded evident.

"I guess there won't be no trouble findin' where the dog's hid," declared the constable, getting down from the wagon. He went at once to the box and lifting the lid pulled out Romulus by the collar. The dog, frightened and dazed, cowered at his feet, seeming not to know what to make of things.

"Ah, you rascals!" shouted the Commodore, more angry than ever, shaking his cane again at our two heroes. "You rascals! You had him there all the time and you told me you hadn't.

You ought to be ashamed of yourselves. Here, Leach, put him right into the wagon."

But here Tristram stepped forward, addressing the constable who was now dragging poor Rom toward the wagon.

"Sir," said he firmly, "you have no right to take that dog. He is mine. These people have made a mistake."

"Oh! I know all about that," answered the constable roughly. "You needn't repeat it. You can't come it over me with that sort of thing, if you *be* from the city. This dog b'longs to the Commydore, here. Everybody in town c'n swear to it. An' we're goin' to take him, too. I don't s'pose ye'll resist the Commonwealth o' Massychoosetts."

"But" — uttered Tristram.

"There ain't no 'buts' about it," the constable cut him short. He took the dog and put him into the wagon, getting in after him; the Commodore was already in his seat. Tristram remonstrated still further, in terms earnest and indignant, but to no effect.

“Very well,” said he at last, so angry that the tears stood in his eyes. “Of course I can’t resist the law. You can take the dog by force. But it’s a wicked shame, and you shall pay dear for it. There’s a law of the land as well as a law of this little bit of a country village.”

And he stood looking wrathfully after them as they drove away.

“We’ll see,” he shouted—though this was largely for his own and Johnnie’s benefit, the wagon being already out of view—“we’ll see whether a man has a right to his own dog or not! ‘Commonwealth of Massachusetts!’ I’ll write to the Governor of Rhode Island by this afternoon’s mail; and there’ll be a man-o’-war in Boston harbor early to-morrow morning, and blow your old brass-covered State House all to pieces!” Tristram could not express himself quite seriously even when he was thoroughly in earnest.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HEPTAGON ROOM.



T was too hot for tennis and too dusty for driving. Miss Challis and Jemima (her name *was* Jemima, as had been her grandmother's before her; and she was a wise, grandmotherly little body, herself, when one came to know her) were out in the

Heptagon Room. The Heptagon Room was an apartment at one of the back corners of the house — seven-sided, as its name implied, and with its sides composed chiefly of glass. In winter it was used as a conservatory; but in summer the windows were removed and, with the aid of

awnings, it was converted into a delightful out-of-door morning-room. The two girls, just now, spent a great deal of time in the Heptagon Room. It was quite secluded and could not be seen at all from the street. The house (so at least Miss Challis chose to believe) was in a state of siege. The young men from the pond had been seen repeatedly, hanging about the front gate and discharging evil glances (like so much round-shot at long range) up the drive-way in the direction of the front-door. The Commodore, as often as he had seen them, had promptly advanced to the piazza's edge and shaken his stick at them and hotly returned their fire with his heaviest guns, calling them bloody pirates and sons of sea-cooks. Meanwhile their purpose was evident. Having stolen Miss Challis's dog in the first place and then having re-stolen him, they now meant to steal him a third time. Therefore it was that Miss Challis kept herself and her dog in the background. Romulus was lying stretched on a rug near the two young ladies. He did not look entirely happy. He had been well fed and well

treated at the Challis house; his new mistress had lavished upon him every tenderness, every indulgence; but Rom was not so ungrateful a dog, after all, as not to have felt the separation (now three days' long) from his master; and moreover the heavy hitching weight to which, like a convict with ball and chain, he had been constantly attached had hardly tended to make him more contented. This last indignity had not been put upon him without a pang by his loving keeper; but it was felt to be absolutely necessary to his safety.

“Poor old Remus!” Miss Challis tenderly murmured as she looked up from her work for perhaps the fortieth time to cast a compassionate glance at the prisoner. “His mistress is dreadfully sorry to have to tie him up in this way.” — Miss Challis said “dreffully sorry,” and her speech and tone otherwise were of that peculiar fashion which ladies are wont to use in addressing pet-dogs and babies, but which we do not attempt here precisely to reproduce. — “But it is for his own good, so it is. There are bad, horrid men

about who would carry him away, and shut him up in a cold, dark box, and never let him see his darling mistress any more."

And Romulus (who had not minded being called Remus and who did not now seem to mind hearing Tristram and Johnnie characterized as "bad, horrid men") returned his mistress's glance not unaffectionately, and thumped feebly with his tail upon the floor, and closed his eyes again. He was a little dull this morning as well as melancholy. Too much Buffalo biscuit had given him a headache.

But Jemima, it would seem, took exception to what Miss Challis had said if Romulus did not.

"*I* don't believe they can be so very bad, aunt Helen," she thoughtfully objected, not however looking up from her book. She was reading a copy of *Martin Chuzzlewit*; or rather she was looking over its illustrations which were by Barnard and were capital. "I'm sure the older one — the scarecrow — was too funny for anything."

"He was too absurd for anything," declared Miss Challis.

“And as for the other,” pursued Jemima, this time raising her eyes and fixing them, it may be presumed, upon a vision of Johnnie as he had appeared that morning at the boat-house, his concertina held defensively before his face, “I’m *sure* he never would hurt anybody.”

“At any rate,” said Miss Challis, “I wish they would go away. I sha’n’t have a moment’s peace so long as they are about. I know they mean to steal him again if they can.” Once more her glance fell fondly upon the dog. “Poor old Remus!” she said again, “he hasn’t seemed a bit like himself since we found him. I suppose they’ve whipped him and ill-treated him all the time he’s been gone. But it’s all over now, dear old fellow. They shall never have him again.”

Just then there was heard the sound of wheels coming up the stable drive (which was separated from the grounds by a tall hedge) and then a voice in the stable yard.

“Who’s that!” cried Miss Challis sharply. “Is it *him*?” and if anybody had accused her of bad grammar, doubtless she would have replied in-

stantly that it was good enough for the person referred to; she was thinking of Tristram.

Jemima got up and peeped through the vines, standing on the tips of her toes.

"No," said she, "it's somebody talking to Edward — a man."

"A man! O, dear! You don't suppose it is somebody *they* have sent?" Miss Challis glanced uncertainly in Rom's direction. Then, with a sudden determination to be on the safe side, she rose from her chair and lifting, with great difficulty, the iron weight quickly went with it into the house, Rom of course following after though quite without lending his consent or very much mechanical assistance to the movement.

When she came back a moment later she found that the "man" had driven on from the stable and halted his wagon at the steps of the Heptagon Room. He was sitting on the seat, talking with Jemima. The wagon (as well as the horse) was a somewhat ancient and dilapidated affair, covered; and from it there proceeded an odor so unmistakable as to give a distinctly tautological

character to the legend, "Fish and Oysters," inscribed upon its side. The man himself was an elderly individual, rather stout, dressed for the most part in a long flannel blouse and a pair of dusty rubber boots. Upon his head was a black "stovepipe" hat, much out of style and repair. His face was largely invisible, being concealed by a pair of green goggles, a thick growth of whisker, and a woollen comforter wound several times about his neck. As soon as he saw Miss Challis, he got down from the wagon and came up the steps.

"Good-mornin', mem," he began very jovially. "Anything in my line, this mornin'? My line is the fish line, you know." He laughed wheezingly. His joke was funny, like the rest of his establishment, because it was antiquated. And then, still advancing, he held out his hand.

But Miss Challis drew haughtily back. She who could keep a supposed book-agent at his distance was not likely to shake hands with a strange fish-pedler. And besides she found herself regarding the person before her with a sense of very

positive distrust. He produced upon her, oddly enough, as she looked at him, a certain twofold effect. Her eyes were perfectly good and she could see, plainly enough, that he was, physically, just what he appeared to be, a not over cleanly, rather ill-appearing and vulgar-spoken old man. Indeed at that moment, somewhat taken aback by her attitude, he pulled off his hat and wiped his brow, revealing as he did so an expanse of bald head undoubtedly genuine. But at the same time his queer attire — his goggles and beard and woollen comforter and blouse — as she took them in, instantly and persistently suggested to her the notion of *disguise*. What were goggles, and thick whiskers, and woollen comforters in warm weather ever used for but for purposes of disguise? And if for disguise, then for the disguise of whom, in this instance, but of that arch deceiver whom she knew already as a person of numberless disguises and subterfuges (with whom she had connected the newcomer even before she had seen him) Mr. Tristram Tuckerman of Providence? Thus it was that as she looked upon her visitor she saw

in him not only the innocent fish-vender that he claimed to be but *also* (and in spite of her common-sense telling her better, she could not for the moment separate the two) our "bad" and "horrid" hero, come back in this greasy guise to wrest from her once more and bear away (the very fish-cart, so well adapted to the purpose, confirmed the thought) her beloved dog.

There was therefore, with all her haughtiness, a slight tremor in the young lady's voice as she answered,

"No, sir ; we want nothing at all."

But the visitor was not fatally abashed.

"That's all right," he declared cheerfully. "I only asked because I allus asks. Bus'niss afore pleasure, ye know! Ye see, Miss, it's jest here." He set one of his feet, at this point, upon the hassock where Jemima had been sitting, and resting his elbow upon his knee spread out his hand before his hearers as though the whole subject lay in its palm. "It's jest *here*. My theory is that ev'ry man orter hev, in addition to his rig'lar bus'niss," all the while the extended hand and

forearm, with the knee for a point of leverage, was moving with slow emphasis up and down—"orter hev, in addition to his rig'lar bus'niss, *somethin' else*, that comes under the head o' pleasure. Ev'ry man orter hev some special art or accomplishment, outside of his bus'niss, thet he c'n take up an' enjoy of off hours. With one man it might be paintin' pictur's; with anuther writin' pomes; an' others might play the fiddle, or raise posies, or putter over tools an' machinery. It depends on each man's nat'ral gifts an' notions. Now with me, mem, it's *dorgs*."

"Dogs!" Miss Challis could not repress an exclamation. It was true, then; he had come about the dog.

"Yes'm, dorgs," pursued the pedler. "Ye see, mem, ever sence I was knee-high to a pint o' oysters, I've b'en crazy over dorgs. Other youngsters might want their kites an' their grim-cracks an' their velossypeeds, but I wanted dorgs. Give me a puppy—Whoa, Habakkuk!"

This last was addressed to his horse who, though quite old enough to entitle him to a place on the

list of the Minor Prophets, had for some moments been exhibiting a youthful impatience to be going.

“Ye see, Miss,” the pedler explained, “he knows jest how long it takes to sell a fish, an’ he’s used to movin’ on when the time is up. I don’t gen’rally combine bus’niss an’ pleasure in this way. Wall, as I wos sayin’ — ”

But Miss Challis had now so far recovered her self-possession as to be capable of self-defense.

“Never mind what you were saying, sir,” she said curtly. “If your horse is impatient, we will not keep him.”

The pedler reassuringly raised his hand. “Never you mind, Miss! This, as I said afore, is pleasure an’ not bus’niss, I didn’t come here to sell *you* any fish — leastways not no ordinary kind o’ fish. I’ve got a dog-fish, now” — He laughed his asthmatic laugh again, looking around at his wagon. “Whoa, Habakkuk !”

Miss Challis glanced significantly at Jemima at this second strange mention of the word dog. But Jemima was listening to the pedler, seemingly not at all aware that he was so suspicious a character.

"However, I'll come to that in one minute," the man continued. "As I was sayin' —"

"But I cannot listen to what you were saying," Miss Challis interrupted him decidedly.

"Oh! yes, you can, Miss," replied the other with cheerful assurance. "You must listen. You'd never forgive yourself if you didn't. As I was sayin' —"

Miss Challis looked desperately about her and in so doing caught sight of Edward, the coachman, going down the garden path. She raised her voice and called out to him.

"Edward," she asked him as he came up, "do you know this man?"

"Know him?" answered Edward laughingly. "Why, to be sure, Miss Helen. It's old Artemas Trimmer, that peddles fish over on the Attleboro road."

"Yes, Miss," Mr. Trimmer himself glibly put in, "peddles fish *and* raises dorgs. Fish is my bus'niss, dorgs is my pleasure. As I was sayin' —"

"Are you sure you know him, Edward?" Miss Challis persisted.

“Why, certainly, Miss Helen. I’ve known him these twenty years.”

“Well!” ejaculated Miss Challis, breathing a sigh of relief and able now really to view her visitor in the singular number. Then “Well, Mr. Trimmer, what was it that you wanted?” she asked.

“Wall, Miss, as I wos sayin’” —

“Oh! but excuse me, Mr. Trimmer, I can’t listen to that now. Please tell me in one word what you wish.”

Mr. Trimmer raised his eyebrows and regarded her with an injured look. Then, with an air that seemed to say, “Oh! very well, Miss. I’ll tell you in less than a word if you wish it,” he plunged his hand, through a slit in his blouse, down deep into some hidden pocket, and then, drawing it forth, held up to view a dog-collar, much battered and worn, but that had evidently in its day pretended to some elegance.

Miss Challis looked at it blankly. “What is it?” said she. “A dog collar?” Then suddenly she recognized it. “Why,” cried she, “it’s mine — Remus’s! Where did you get it?”

Mr. Trimmer, still without a word, handed her the collar.

She took it and examined it. "Yes," said she, reading from the plate, "'Abram Challis. Number Twenty-One.' Yes; it is the collar Remus had on when he was lost."

"Yes," said Mr. Trimmer, taking back the collar and now finding his voice again. "And the one he had on when he was found, too."

"Had on when he was found?" repeated Miss Challis. "What do you mean?"

"You lost a dorg, I b'lieve, some two months ago," said Mr. Trimmer.

"Why, yes — but" —

Mr. Trimmer calmly put up his hand. "Never you mind, Miss. Excuse *me*. And you advertised him, didn't you? — a Gordon setter, black-white-an'-tan, weighs forty-five pounds. Is that so?" He waited for his answer.

"Yes; but" —

"Twenty-five dollars reward to the finder?"

"Of course. But" —

"Very well. *I've got the dorg!*" Mr. Trimmer

regarded her with a look of mingled triumph and gleefulness.

“Got the dog?” repeated Miss Challis, knitting her brows. “What do you mean?”

“I mean, Miss, that here is the collar an’ the dorg himself ain’t fur off. Whoa, Habakkuk!”

Habakkuk this time had started resolutely on and had nearly disappeared around the front of the house before his master, running after, succeeded in stopping him. Then it was that the two girls, looking on in perplexity and wonder from the Heptagon Room steps (Edward had gone about his work again) saw the mysterious fish-pedler go to the back of his wagon and, fumbling there a moment, all at once turn toward them again with a dog in his arms. This dog, as the man drew near, was seen to be a handsome Gordon setter, of the purest plumb-black and sienna-brown color with white markings—the perfect counterpart in size and appearance of that other dog whom the reader has come to know as Romulus, the property of Tristram Tuckerman, who had been so hurriedly withdrawn from the scene,

Mr. Trimmer came proudly forward and put the dog down at the steps, holding him by a steel chain attached to the collar which he had replaced about the animal's neck. Miss Challis stood there, her face suddenly grown almost colorless; but she did not move or make any sign. The dog, however, instantly now as he saw her (poor fellow! he had been through some strange experiences since he had seen her last and may be pardoned for not recognizing her before) uttered a cry of joy and would have leaped upon her but that the chain held him.

"There, Miss," said Mr. Trimmer, grinning broadly, "there's your dorg."

But Miss Challis drew stiffly back, compressing her lips.

"You are entirely mistaken," said she. "My dog is in the house. I found him some time ago."

Mr. Trimmer looked suddenly thunderstruck. "Your dorg in the house!" he exclaimed. "You've found him! What d'ye mean? Ain't *that* your dorg? Whose dorg is it then?"

"That is for you to say," answered Miss Challis stonily.

"But, Miss, he answers to your description eggshactly. An' there's the collar."

"A collar is not a dog, sir," declared Miss Challis with absolute truthfulness.

"Yes, Miss; but — whoa, Habakkuk! Whoa!"

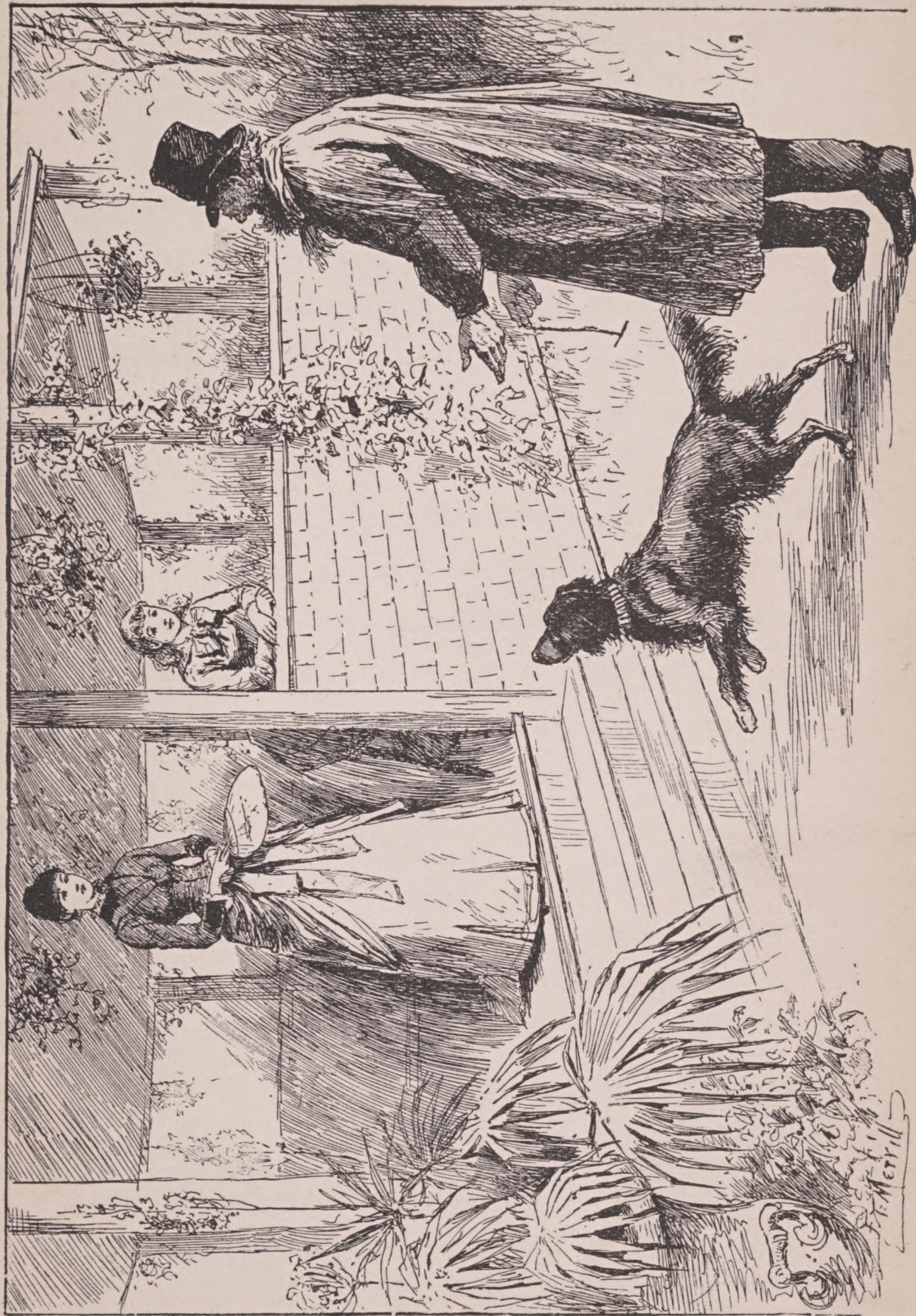
He looked wildly around. Habakkuk was quite invisible now, wagon and all; but the sound of retreating wheels and a multiplied foot-fall upon the pavement testified to the fact that his impatience had at length fairly gotten the better of him and that he had started off, full speed, for the front gate. Mr. Trimmer dropped the steel chain. "Take care o' that dorg jest a minute, will ye, Miss?" he said. "I must look out f'r my horse." And then he disappeared on the run.

The moment his back was turned Miss Challis's whole demeanor changed. She sprang forward with face all aglow and glistening eyes, and, sinking on her knee, with a little cry of rapture received full into her arms the dog who, finding himself free, had again leaped towards her.

“O, Remus! Remus!” she cried, and hugged and kissed him again and again, with such tenderness as never since that day she first met him in the road had she bestowed upon our old friend Romulus when she had thought him hers. *This* was a real finding. *This* was her own darling dog. Her heart told her now that it was so, as it had not told her before. “O, Remus! Remus! To think that I should ever have mistaken another dog for you!” And she begged his pardon over and over with twenty burning kisses and caresses.

“Why, Auntie!” exclaimed Jemima, standing and staring at her. “I believe you knew it was your dog all the time.”

“Knew it!” cried Miss Challis. “Of course I knew it! But I wasn’t going to acknowledge it to him. I *couldn’t*. O, Jemima, what a stupid, wicked, abominable blunder we have made! What a goose I have been—to think that that other dog was Remus and to take him away from those boys as I did. What *shall* I ever do about it? I never, never, *never* can acknowledge to them that I was wrong, so long as I live! O,



"HE IS NOT MINE," SAID THE YOUNG LADY FIRMLY.

Remus, why *didn't* you come back a week sooner?" And she fell to embracing the dog again, so excited and unstrung by what had occurred that she hardly knew what she was saying or doing.

"But, aunt Helen," Jemima severely assured her, "you will *have* to acknowledge to them that you were wrong, and give them back their dog and apologize. Of course you will!"

"O, dear! O, dear!" moaned Miss Challis. She was fairly prostrated now upon the floor with her arms clasped tightly about Remus's neck. "What shall I do! What shall I do!" Then all at once, quick as a lightning-flash, she was up again, alert and stern. "Hark! What's that?" she uttered, and stood listening like a hunted doe.

The varied cry of men's voices could be heard in the street, and then the exultant tones of the fish-pedler: "O-ho, you've got him, hev ye? Whoa, Habakkuk!"

"There he is!" cried Miss Challis. "He's coming back! Remus — here, quick!"

She seized the dog by the chain and without a moment's hesitation, to the complete astonish-

ment of her companion, turned and went with him swiftly into the house.

She was gone two or three minutes. Then she abruptly reappeared. She walked straight forward, her head erect, her step firm, though evidently she was much excited. She still held in her hand the steel chain with collar and dog attached.

"Aunt Helen, what *is* the matter with you?" said Jemima sternly. "Why need you make such a time about it?"

Miss Challis made no reply; and at that moment the sound of wheels was again heard and then Mr. Trimmer once more drove up.

"Wall, I've got him!" he announced triumphantly. "Whoa, Habakkuk!" and he jumped down from the wagon.

"Mr. Trimmer," Miss Challis said to him, "I want you to take this dog away. He is not mine."

"But, Miss" — Mr. Trimmer began to protest.

The young lady shook her head firmly, almost angrily.

"I have nothing more to say about it. He is not mine."

“But, Miss, is this the way to treat a man? I will see your father. Where is he?”

“He is away now, for a day or two. You can see him when he returns, if you wish.”

“But do you mean to say that dorg is not the one you lost?”

“Yes, sir; that dog is not the one I lost.”

And so, obliged to content himself for the present with only this, but vowing he would see the Commodore as soon as he got home, Mr. Trimmer sadly put the dog into his wagon and drove away.

“Why, aunt Helen!” Jemima reproachfully cried as soon as he was gone, “how could you tell him such a story.”

“I haven’t told him any story,” said Miss Challis grimly. “That dog is not mine. *I gave him the other dog — the one that belongs to those boys!*”

CHAPTER VIII.

AN ANONYMOUS COMMUNICATION.

MEANWHILE all was quiet at the camp. Nothing serious had happened since the earthquake. A kind of saddened stillness hung about the place. There was no noise of song and laughter; the concertina was put away; the dishes rattled in the pan with but a half-hearted and muffled sound. Romulus was gone. The places that so well had known him—the restful shadow of the pine-tree, the sunny platform of the boat-house, the ice-box under the table—these, alas! knew him no more; and his master was inconsolable. Tristram had written to his father to know what he should do, but it was now the third morning and no answer had been received; and still the great wrong that had been done remained unrighted, and, twenty-five miles away on

the heights of Beacon, the brass-covered State House still glittered undemolished in the sun. Tristram, day by day, grew more silent and irritable and out of sorts. Nothing went right. Even the cooking suffered; the fried fish got salted with sugar and the pudding got sweetened with salt. And so poor Johnnie suffered too.

The afternoon mail at Random came in at five o'clock. Tristram and Johnnie were on hand at the office on the afternoon of this third day, still expecting the important letter. And still again the mail was opened and delivered and that letter had not come. There came to-day in its place however, another important letter—at least one that had the appearance of being important.

It was a business-like looking document, directed, in a bold masculine hand, to Mr. Tristram Tuckerman, stamped with a blue stamp and postmarked "Random." Tristram tore it open as soon as he got out of the office and read it with a countenance filled with sudden interest and wonder.

"Well, what is it?" asked Johnnie, who was watching him.

Tristram held the letter out before him by way of answer — a plain half-sheet of letter paper on which was written these words :

If the owner of "Romulus" will go at once to a small yellow house on the Attleboro road just beyond Mason's Corner, he will hear of something to his advantage.

A Friend.

"Well, that's funny," observed Johnnie. "Who do you suppose wrote it?"

"I don't know," said Tristram. "It seems to be anonymous."

"It couldn't have been Sinker Hotchkiss?"

"Sinker Hotchkiss? No, indeed! Sinker Hotchkiss couldn't sign his own name."

"He wouldn't have to—to an anonymous letter," said Johnnie simply. And then, "Maybe it's the Challis girl," he suggested.

"Humph! She isn't 'a friend.'"

"Do you suppose *anybody* wrote it?" Johnnie asked.

"Yes," said Tristram, "I do. It bears unmistakable marks of having been written by some-

body. But of course I don't know who. There are plenty of people who might have written it. All Random must know about the dog by this time. However, that isn't the point. It's evidently somebody who means to help us get Rom back."

"Maybe it's a hoax," said Johnnie warily.

"Maybe it is; but I'm going to go and find out all the same."

"You are? When?"

"Right off — as soon as I can get a horse. The letter says 'at once.'"

"What, without any supper!" cried Johnnie.

"Yes; without any supper. Come on."

And they went across the Green to the livery stable.

They readily learned, while the horse was being harnessed, the exact whereabouts of Mason's Corner and the Attleboro Road. They said nothing about the yellow house; Tristram did not think it prudent. And starting off at half-past five with only a six-mile drive before them, they found themselves, while the sun was still well up, in the

immediate vicinity of their quest. They discovered the yellow house without asking any questions (indeed there was nobody to ask; the locality was a lonely one) and drew up (quite filled with curiosity and expectation now) before its broken gate. The house was a rickety structure, one-and-a-half stories high, with very untidy surroundings. A covered wagon, marked "Fish and Oysters" stood at rest in the side yard. A vociferous chorus of barkings, as if there were a dozen dogs on the premises, greeted their arrival, though only one appeared in sight. This one, a small Scotch terrier, came snapping about their heels as they alighted, until a man appeared at the door of the house and called him off.

This man was a stranger to our two heroes, though already known to the reader as Mr. Artemas Trimmer. He advanced to meet his visitors with great cordiality, holding out his hand.

"Wall, boys, how d'ye do, how d'ye do? Glad to see ye. What c'n I do f'r ye? Is it bus'niss or pleasure?"

"Well," Tristram answered, laughing and not

disdaining the offered member, "it's a little of both, I fancy." He did not know exactly what he had come for himself; but he thought that if he waited a little perhaps he might find out.

"Ah! a leetle of both, is it?" Mr. Trimmer briskly rubbed his hands together. "We combine the two, do we? Very well. That ain't altogether a bad plan, I sometimes find, myself. Now my bus'niss, ye see, is fish. I buys 'em an' I sells 'em."

"So we inferred," observed Tristram, glancing toward the wagon.

"Yaas; fish is my bus'niss, as I wos sayin'. But it's a theory o' mine, ye know, that ev'ry man, in addition to his rig'lar bus'niss, orter have *some-thin' else* that comes under the head o' pleasure, 'n' thet he c'n take up an' injoy of off hours. With one man it might be paintin' picturs; with another writin' pomes; an' another might play the fiddle" —

"Yes, or the concertina," Johnnie here interposed with animation.

"Yaas, or a concertina," said Mr. Trimmer

nodding. "Or posies, or sculpturin', or machinery or — or dorgs. Mine's dorgs."

"Ah!" uttered Tristram with instant interest. "You deal in dogs, do you?"

"Deal in 'em! Young man, I revel in 'em. Dorgs is my delight. Ever sence I was knee high to a pint o' oysters" — And Mr. Trimmer went on, in a strain with which the reader is already familiar and must not be troubled with a second time, enlarging eloquently on his favorite subject.

Tristram listened patiently but broke in as soon as he found it possible with a request to be shown the dogs in Mr. Trimmer's present possession. He did not know what he expected; it certainly had not entered his head that his own dog could be anywhere about the place; but — especially now that he found that the owner of the yellow house was a dealer in dogs — he eagerly expected *something*.

Mr. Trimmer declared that nothing in the world would give him more pleasure (whether it were connected with business or not) than to gratify

this request, and he at once led the way around the house.

Along an open space in the rear, under a row of apple-trees, there were ranged, like so many chicken-coops, a number of dog-houses, from the respective doors of which, as our friends drew near, there rushed forth a dozen or more dogs—setters, bull-dogs, spaniels, terriers—all yelping and barking and springing forward, so far as their chains permitted, to meet the visitors. But for only one of them did our two heroes have any eyes at that moment. That was Romulus.

Tristram stopped and stared.

“Where, in the name of Nicodemus,” he gasped, “did you get *him*?”

And then, not waiting for an answer, he strode forward and kneeling down began caressing the dog almost as effusively as Miss Challis herself might have done.

The next instant however his glance fell upon the dog’s collar and he read the inscription, “*Abram Challis, No. 21.*” He scowled, took off his eyeglasses and rubbed them, and then read it

again ; after which he gazed at it for several moments in a state of growing stupefaction. Abram Challis ! What did it mean ? Shade of the Duke of Gordon ! could it be that this — *that this was the other dog ?* He looked at him again, his gold-brown eyes, his black nose, his silken ears, his head and body and tail. He knew him every inch of him, every spot and line that testified to his pure Gordon descent. And yet — *did* he know him ? He turned almost fiercely to the fish-man.

“Where did you get this dog ?” he demanded again.

“Where did I git him ?” was the calm rejoinder. “Wall, I come by him honestly, I guess.”

“Whose dog is he ?”

“You c’n see f’r y’rself. The owner’s name is on the collar.”

“Is that Commodore Challis’s dog ?”

“Yes, sir ; it is. An’ f’r thet matter, I hain’t no objection to tellin’ how I come by him. I found him, a week ago, over Woonsocket way — a party hed him who, I hain’t a doubt, stole him in the fust place an’ was holdin’ of him on account

o' the reward ; an' then didn't darst claim it after all. But *I* propose to claim it — twenty-five dollars in full."

"Well!" Tristram ejaculated. "You may cut me up into steaks and smother me in onions!" — And then words failed him. He stood and looked down at the dog utterly amazed and confounded. Rom looked back at him and whined and wagged his tail, saying as plainly as dog could say it, "Master, master, here I am again, your own dog Romulus. What is the matter? Aren't you going to take me away with you, out of this place?" And his master hearing did not understand, and seeing refused to perceive that this was his own dog ; but slowly and surely made up his mind instead that it was Miss Challis's dog, Remus — the one that looked like Rom. Looked like him? Zounds ! Were ever two dogs in this world that looked so much alike before !

"I could have sworn by all the ex-Presidents of the United States," Tristram slowly avowed, "that that was my dog. *Look* at him, Lovey. Did you ever see anything like it?"

"No," said Lovey, "I never did."

"It's no wonder she made the mistake she did," declared Tristram, seeing Miss Challis's conduct at that moment in a gentler light than any in which it had before presented itself. "I vow, I nearly made it myself."

Mr. Trimmer meanwhile listened to all this with no little perplexity. There was some mystery about this matter which he did not understand. Were there two dogs instead of one? If so possibly he had made a mistake. These young men seemed to have no doubt that this was Commodore Challis's dog; but *he* had his doubts most seriously now, remembering that Miss Challis herself had denied it. He realized that his twenty-five dollars was in imminent danger. He shrewdly kept his counsel therefore; and he was quite prepared for the proposition that our hero, a moment later, abruptly made him.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said Tristram. "This is Commodore Challis's dog. Now I happen to know the Commodore; and if you like, I'll take him back for you, to save you the trouble."

"I'm much obleeged to ye," Mr. Trimmer coolly responded. "Very kind of you to be sure. But how about the reward?"

"Oh! I'll collect the reward for you. Or, the Commodore will send it to you, no doubt."

"Thank ye very much," said Mr. Trimmer, "but I guess I'd better collect it myself. I shall know then I've got it."

"Well, look here," Tristram persisted. "I'll give you five dollars, cash, to let me take the dog back. You can get the reward all right, later. Come now, that's a fair offer." It certainly was a fair offer, more than fair; but Tristram was extremely anxious to take Miss Challis's dog back to her himself.

"Yes," Mr. Trimmer admitted, "that's a fair offer; but I don't b'lieve I'll accept. Tell you what I will do, though. You give me the twenty-five dollars an' take the dorg. An' then *you* can hev the reward."

Tristram hesitated. He had not twenty-five dollars with him, for that matter. "Lovey," said he, "how much money have you?"

Johnnie examined his pockets and reported eight dollars.

"I've got just fifteen, myself," said Tristram.

"Well, sir—" this to Mr. Trimmer — "We'll give you twenty dollars now, and the other five when we get the reward. How will that do?"

"I dun know but that'll do," agreed the fishman. And in his heart he felt that it would do extremely well.

And so the matter was arranged. Romulus (it made no more difference to him now than it had before that he was supposed to be Remus; it was enough for him that he was once again with Tristram and Johnnie) joyfully followed his master to the gate, led by the steel chain, and was put into the buggy.

Then, with the sun just sinking over the western horizon and the moon coming up round and full in the east, the two boys set gayly off on their return. Tristram felt that at last his troubles were over. Miss Challis would certainly give up to him his Romulus when he brought her back her Remus.

CHAPTER IX.

A LITTLE SURPRISE.



RISTRAM was so happy the next morning that he made Johnnie a strawberry shortcake for breakfast. He had arranged it all during the night. "We'll spend our last dollar and a half," said

he, "in giving her a little surprise. We'll get a horse and drive around there, keeping the dog out of sight somewhere under the seat. And then we'll ring the bell (old Jupiter Tonans won't be there ; I heard Jemima tell the postmistress, last night, that he'd gone away for several days) and will ask to see Miss Challis on important business. She'll come down quick enough when she hears

that ; her curiosity will bring her. And then I'll ask her for my dog again ; and she will look at me with those black eyes of hers and go down to zero instanter, and freezingly inform me, once for all, that she hasn't my dog. And then I'll call out to you (you'll be sitting in the buggy) and you'll pull out the dog and hold him up. And, lo ! Grand Tableau : Triumph of virtue ; utter discomfiture of impulsive young lady ; Remus found ; Romulus restored ; tears, smiles, blushes ; all forgiven ; everybody happy. Ha, ha, ha !”

Tristram laughed hilariously and pounded with his fist upon the table as he contemplated in imagination this final scene of the drama. And perhaps, far down on the horizon of his enraptured vision, there dimly reappeared at this moment the outlines of another scene even more enchanting — a summer day ; a lawn smooth and green as velvet ; a tennis court ; a young man and a young woman nimbly moving in the sunlight ; while the wingéd balls flew high and fast between them. He laughed and laughed again. “ Here, Remus, you rascal, source of all my woes, thou who hast

brought down upon me 'the relentless anger of the cruel Juno,' take that." He flung the dog a bit of steak, a piece of the very tenderloin. And Rom, answering not to the name but the morsel, seized the meat and ate it greedily, as he had done twenty times before on that very spot. Rom felt perfectly at home of course. Only he wondered and fretted at being chained to a table leg. His master had never treated him in this way before.

Miss Challis and Jemima were in the Heptagon Room this morning as yesterday. Remus lay stretched near by, where Romulus yesterday had lain — attached too by the same strap and collar (it was Rom's collar) to the same iron weight. His mistress did not yet dare let him run free. The morning was warm; but there had been a shower during the night and the girls were talking of going driving. No doubt Miss Challis would have ordered the yellow pony and driven off at once had she known of the "little surprise" that had been planned for her benefit and the joyous cavalcade that even now was on its way to her door. But she was blissfully unconscious of all

this. She congratulated herself that she was through with our hero and done with him—him, and his friend, and his dog. It was she (as the intelligent reader will have surmised) who had written the anonymous letter. Not that she was in the habit of writing anonymous letters; but Tristram of course must have his dog; and she could not and would not return the animal to him directly and confess herself wrong: she had her own dog now, and *nobody* should ever make her acknowledge that she had not had him all along. And for Mr. Trimmer, she meant to ask her father to send him a check as soon as he returned. And having thus arranged matters she hoped now to be left in peace. She was therefore not at all pleased when presently Mollie appeared with the announcement that Tristram was at the door and wished to see her on important business.

Miss Challis rose hastily to her feet, dropping work and glancing fearfully about her.

“Oh! but I can’t see him,” she said, with her face very red. “Tell him I am engaged.”

“That’s just what I did tell him,” Mollie an-

swered, "but he persisted upon it that he *must* see yez—it's a case of absolute needcessity. An' he smiled so swately, Miss Helen, when he took off thim no-bowed spectacles of his, that I couldn't refuse but come and tell ye."

"Why don't you see him, Auntie, and have done with it?" said Jemima.

But Miss Challis was quite determined.

"Indeed I shall not!" cried she. "I've no desire to see him. I *never* want to see him again. He has his dog and I have mine; and he has no right to come here and force himself upon me any more. Just go back, Mollie, and say that I can't possibly see him, either now or at any other time. And don't come to me again."

This last was in a tone that the servant was accustomed to obey, and she resolutely went back with her message.

"But I *must* see her," Tristram firmly repeated when he received it. "It is of the *utmost* importance."

"She towld me to tell yez she couldn't see yez," Mollie firmly replied.

"O, yes! she will see me," Tristram assured her. "You go and ask her again."

"She towld me to tell yez she couldn't see yez."

"But I've got something for her, something she'll want to see."

"She towld me to tell yez she couldn't see yez." Mollie paid no attention to his words. She had made up her mind, this time, not to be cajoled or argued into disobeying instructions.

"Tell her if she'll see me," pleaded Tristram, "I can prove to her in one moment that she's got the wrong dog."

"She towld me to tell yez she couldn't see yez."

"O, bother!" said Tristram. "You go and tell her what I say."

"She towld me to tell yez she couldn't see yez."

"But I know she would see me if she knew what I had out here."

"She towld me to tell yez she couldn't see yez."

"Oh! come, that's a good girl. Go and tell her." He coupled the entreaty with his most seductive smile.

But Mollie, though she smiled back, still stuck to her text.

“Well!” observed Tristram at length, very much put out, “if you aren’t the most ligneous-headed individual it was ever *my* fortune to encounter!”

Mollie at this smiled her own sweetest smile, not doubting that she had received an extra fine compliment; but again she repeated her formula.

“You won’t tell her, then?”

“She towld me to tell yez she couldn’t see yez.”

“You absolutely, distinctly, categorically, dogmatically and astronomically refuse, do you?”

Mollie raised her voice a little, still repeating her sentence.

Tristram looked desperately about. What was to be done in the face of such unreasonableness and stupidity as this? Something must be done. He could not go away as he had come. He would try a new method with the obdurate domestic. He summoned his fiercest frown.

“I have had enough of this,” he sternly declared. “I must see Miss Challis. Where is

she?" And he made a movement as if to push his way into the house.

But Mollie was not to be intimidated. She folded her arms and planted herself squarely across the doorway. "She towld me to tell yez she couldn't see yez," she said once more, compressing her lips.

At this juncture a quick, decided step was heard on the floor; and then, all in an instant, there was Miss Challis herself fully confronting our astonished hero. Her face was flushed and her eyes were flashing sharply. She was not "down to zero" by any means, our hero instantly perceived. She was at least "ninety above, in the shade."

"What does this mean?" she indignantly demanded. "What is wanted? Have you come here again, sir, to make a disturbance as you did the other day? My father is not at home, sir; but the coachman is at hand. I can call him."

Tristram drew back in confusion. No matter where he met this young lady or under what circumstances, she was sure to put him to a disad-

vantage to begin with and set him to apologizing.

"I was simply asking this person if I could see you," he meekly explained.

"And she told you I was engaged, did she not?"

"Ye-es," answered Tristram. "But my business was of the greatest importance. I wished to see you about the dog."

The young lady stamped her foot. "I do not *wish* to be seen about the dog, sir. There has been enough about the dog. The dog that I have with me, here in this house, is my dog. I mean to keep him. Further than that I have nothing to say to you in the matter." She raised her head and looked our hero straight in the face with an air of magnificent rectitude. And the reader will do her the justice to remember that what she said was absolutely true. The dog in her possession was certainly her own dog. She did not feel called upon to say any more than this. She had let him know (and it had cost her something to do it) where his dog could be found. If he was so stupid as not to know his own dog now that he had

found him (and she began to perceive that this was exactly the fact of the case) she was not bound to help him out of the difficulty. In order to do that she would have to tell him of the change she had made in the dogs yesterday; and that would be to confess that she had had the wrong dog in the first place; and *that* she would *never* do.

Tristram laughed. He could not help it, the whole thing was so ridiculous, and matters were really so completely in his own hands. She would change her manner a bit when she saw what he had in the buggy.

“But, Miss Challis,” said he, “I have it in my power now to prove that you are mistaken” —

Miss Challis interrupted with an impatient gesture. “I don’t wish to hear anything of proofs, or anything else about the matter. I’ve done with it.”

“But I’ve got the proof with me.”

Miss Challis knew perfectly well what was coming; but it was this, of all things, that she wished to avoid. She saw that her only safety was in flight. “Mollie,” she said with dignity, “if you will stay right here, just where you are now” —

Mollie still guarded the door — “I will speak to Edward.” And she turned away.

“O! but, Miss Challis — Miss Challis” — cried Tristram. “I beg that you’ll wait a moment. I’ve found your own dog. I’ve got him with me out in the buggy. I” —

But Miss Challis’ ears were deaf to this desperate appeal and the tidings it conveyed. She did not pause or turn. She was already at the rear door; and the next moment she had disappeared. Our unhappy hero could only address himself again to the servant.

“Go after her and tell her, instantly, what I’ve just said,” he imperiously ordered her. “Tell her I’ve got her own dog out here, and that I *will have mine!*”

“She towld me to tell yez she couldn’t see yez,” again answered the imperturbable Mollie.

“Do as I tell you!”

Mollie put out her tongue at him, just the least little bit of it, and winked (ever so slightly) with one of her eyes. “She towld me to tell yez she couldn’t see yez.”

Tristram was well nigh beside himself. He bit his lip, and flourished his eyeglasses, and stormed and demanded furiously — but all in vain. Whatever he might say or do, Mollie resolutely and persistently presented to him, like a set bayonet, that single sentence ; and he was quite unable to beat it down or get within its point. There was nothing for it but (temporarily at least) to abandon the effort ; and he turned away at length and went slowly down the steps and back to the carriage, calling down upon the ill-fated house and all its inmates fire and sword and pestilence, siege and bombardment, utter demolishment and destruction.

“What are you going to do now ?” Johnnie inquired as they passed out the gate and turned down the street. Johnnie, cowering within the buggy, had heard and comprehended all.

“I’ll be threshed if I know,” growled Tristram, and savagely brought his whip down upon the back of the horse. “There’s one thing I do know, though. I’m going to have my dog !”

And (alas for the absurdity of it !) poor Rom-

ulus, putting out his head at that moment from beneath the seat, found himself rudely cuffed and thrust back. Tristram had a good mind to take him straight over to the pond and drown him, just to spite that girl who *didn't know her own dog*.

CHAPTER X.

TWO COUSINS FROM CORK.

NOW truly was Tristram desperate. What would he do next? Indeed he did not know. What could he do? "The dog that I have is my dog and I mean to keep him. Further than that, I have nothing to say to you in the matter." That was just it. The dog she had was hers and she would hear no more about it. With such a wall of unreasonableness and inconsistency as that she had surrounded herself, and before it our poor hero halted baffled and helpless.

"I don't see but what you'll have to go to law about it," Johnnie observed.

But Tristram shook his head. Law forsooth! What would this young lady care for the law? "No," said he. "There's only one thing left us—the resort to force. We'll each get a cord-

wood stick — you and I and Sinker Hotchkiss — and march over there, single file, and *take* the dog.”

Johnnie looked rather dubious.

“But we couldn’t do it,” he soberly objected. “There’d be the Commodore, you know, and the coachman, and that servant girl” —

“Well, then,” said Tristram, “we’ll have out the militia. We’ll get the Governor of Rhode Island to declare war on the Governor of Massachusetts and send down the Providence Light Infantry in their bear-skin caps to attack the house.”

“I think it would be better to do the thing peaceably if we could,” reasoned Johnnie. “If she could only see her own dog, she’d understand how she had been mistaken.”

“Yes; but she won’t see him. You saw how she acted. She wouldn’t look at him when I had him right there.”

“I know,” Johnnie admitted. “But suppose we should go there with him again, and hold him up in plain sight before the windows — she’d *have* to look at him then, wouldn’t she?”

Tristram laughed. "No," said he, "I'll be switched if she would. She'd slam to the blinds and pull down all the curtains and cover up her head with her apron."

"Well, then," said Johnnie, "why couldn't we do like they do with foundlings — put him in a basket and hang him on the front-door-knob, and then ring the bell and run away. She'd look at him then."

At which suggestion, though he did not seem to accept it, Tristram laughed more heartily than ever. Tristram, after all, was not feeling as blue about the matter as he had been in times before. He still felt that with Miss Challis's dog found and in his possession, it could hardly be that he should not soon get back his own.

But later, when Johnnie, who had gone over alone for the five o'clock mail, returned (still without a letter), Tristram broke out again: "Lovey, I've been thinking of that plan of yours."

"What plan?" asked Lovey.

"Why, hanging the dog on the door-knob. I'm not sure but it would be a stroke of genius."

"Is that so?" answered Johnnie. This was rather more than he had claimed for it.

"Yes," said Tristram, stirring the hash upon the stove. "You see, I don't want *her* dog, anyway, whether she wants mine or not. I've no use for him. I'm tired of seeing him around." He glanced contemptuously at Rom who was lying under the table morbidly chewing his chain. "He looks like Rom, but he isn't Rom. He isn't half the dog that Rom is. And I've concluded that the best thing we can do is to take him over there and leave him, as you propose. She couldn't help but look at him then, as you say; and no doubt when she saw both dogs she'd realize her mistake and repent."

"Yes," Johnnie affirmed. "She couldn't help looking at him if we hung him on the door-knob."

"Oh!" said Tristram, "I don't mean literally to put him in a basket and hang him on the door. But we'll take him over there — this very night, as soon as it's dark — and leave him there, somewhere where they'll be sure to find him. I've got it all planned. Sinker Hotchkiss was just here;

and he says that Edward, the man (he and Sinker are great friends), is going to be away somewhere this evening with Mollie, the second-girl — so there'll be nobody there but Miss Challis and Jemima and the cook. (The Commodore is away, you know.) Sinker has given me the 'lay of the land,' so that I could go up there blindfold and go all over the place, house and all. We'll put on our tennis shoes so as not to make a noise on the concrete; and we'll wear the worst-looking coats and hats we've got, so as not to be recognized if anybody should happen to see us; and we'll — yes, I've got it all planned. Are you ready for supper?"

"I should say so!" declared Johnnie. "I'm as hungry as a pair of horses." It must have struck him that Tristram's plans were rather elaborate, considering that their object was simply to go up into the Challis grounds after dark and leave the dog; but just then Johnnie was thinking more of the hash than of what his friend was saying.

The village clock was just ringing eight as the two boys set forth from the camp upon their even-

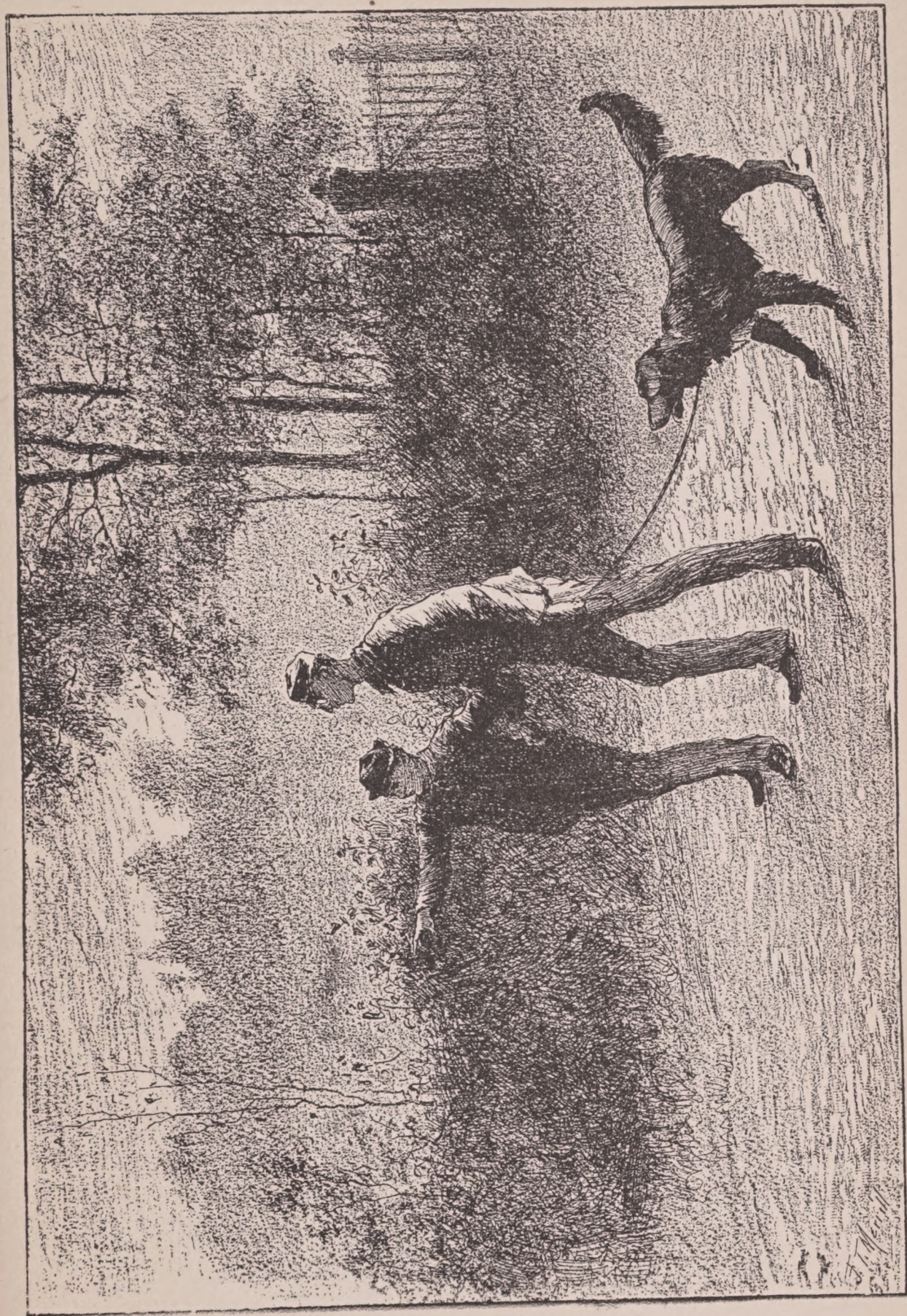
ing expedition. Romulus listlessly followed them, led by a piece of hemp string that had been substituted (as of less noisy material) for the steel chain. It was a beautiful night, warm and still — almost too beautiful for their purpose which, though not a wicked one, was one of darkness. They went around by what was called the Pond Road, striking the main street of the village a half-mile below the Green; and thence they made their way along the less frequented side, in the thick shadow of the trees, toward the Challis mansion, turning in at length, without having met anybody, at the driveway leading to the stable. Here they felt comparatively secure from observation.

They cautiously advanced between the hedges. Half-way up the drive a sound of girlish laughter came over to them from the adjoining grounds. Johnnie nervously seized his companion by the arm. "There they are!" he whispered. To which Tristram coolly answered, "All right, I'm glad to know it. If we know where they are, we can keep clear of 'em." They came presently to the stable-yard. The doors of the stable were

closed and all was quiet. A dog-house stood in one corner. Tristram's heart beat quicker for a moment as he thought that Rom might be in it; but it was empty. "Why not tie the dog here and leave him?" Johnnie suggested; but Tristram impatiently shook his head. They must go nearer the house than that.

They passed on, therefore, through a second double gate, and found themselves in full view of the house, separated from it by a partially enclosed space paved with concrete and flooded with moonlight. At the corner of the house nearest them was a peculiar attachment, open like a piazza, and of irregular shape. To the left of this the drive led off around the front of the house; to the right, along an ell, ran a narrow piazza-passage, shaded with vines; and at the end of this the lights of the kitchen could be seen. No other lights were visible. The two boys listened a moment; and then, hearing no sound, they sped swiftly across the enclosure and took refuge in the concealing shadows of the Heptagon Room.

"Ah!" muttered Tristram, looking about him.



"THEY CAUTIOUSLY ADVANCED BETWEEN THE HEDGES."

“This must be what Sinker Hotchkiss meant by the ‘Hepzibah Room.’ I never knew what a Hepzibah Room was before. It’s a room with seven sides to it. I should think she would want a room with seven sides; she’s about that many-sided herself, what I’ve seen of her. It seems to be a comfortable sort of place — chairs, tables, hassocks and so forth, all complete. Thank you, Miss ” (this, of course, in response to a wholly imaginary invitation from a wholly imaginary young lady), “I *will* take a chair, since you insist upon it.” He sat down in a light wakefield sewing-chair trimmed with cherry ribbons, Miss Challis’s peculiar property, and rocked himself to and fro. The chair creaked and sputtered shrilly, representing the rudeness. “Seems to me you make a good deal of noise,” growled Johnnie, to whose imagination the young lady of the house was also vividly present. “Is that so?” said Tristram coolly. And then, “What’s that yonder?” he asked, and got up to go and examine a black, round object that lay upon the floor. It was a hitching weight. There was a strap attached to

it, and at the end of the strap — yes, an empty collar, Romulus's own. Tristram would have known it by a feebler light than that which now served him. "Upon my word!" he indignantly cried out. "If this isn't outrageous! That is what she hitches Rom to; and it weighs ten pounds if it weighs an ounce. I've a good mind to tie *her* dog to it and see how she likes it."

"Why don't you?" said Johnnie. "This is as good a place as any to leave him."

"All right, I will." And Tristram, first removing the collar, pulled Rom forward to the hitching weight (the dog knew the thing of old and doggedly resisted) and fastened the strap to the Challis collar which was on his neck. The other collar (his own property) and the piece of string he carefully put away in his coat pocket.

"Now," said Johnnie, turning towards the steps, "let's go."

"What's your hurry?" asked Tristram. "This isn't a ceremonious call."

"We've finished what we came for," said Johnnie.

"Well, we'll go," said Tristram. "Not that

way, though. *Vestigia nulla retrorsum*. No backward steps, you know. That's the Tuckerman motto. 'A wise traveller,' says Rob Roy, 'never returns by the way he came.' Somebody may be on our track."

"You don't think so?" uttered Johnnie, looking around with apprehension.

"I don't know. We'd better go this way, anyhow. Good-by, you old good-for-nothing." — This to Rom who moodily stood there, refastened to his weight.— "You don't seem a bit glad to get home again. Give my regards to Miss Challis (if I don't see her myself) and tell her if she isn't instantly overcome with shame and remorse when she finds you, and doesn't send me an abject apology at once, I shall cross her name off my calling list."

Then he turned and passed out from the Heptagon Room to the narrow piazza that ran along the ell, Johnnie reluctantly following. Johnnie did not at all see the necessity of a movement which lead directly toward the lighted kitchen, but Tristram gravely insisted that they must go around

the house in order to get safely away. "Besides," said he, "I want to pay my respects to the cook. The etiquette of the profession, you know; I'm a cook myself." At which Johnnie doubtfully shook his head as he followed on. He was far from liking the mood that his friend seemed to be in. Tristram was too careless and light-minded by half, considering the nature of the expedition. And Johnnie felt it in his bones that there was trouble ahead.

At the end of the piazza, peering around the corner, they saw the kitchen, its windows and doors wide open, and the light streaming out. Still no one was seen or heard, however, and presently they moved to go down the steps. In so doing Tristram's foot struck with force against a movable iron scraper, dislodging it from its place and causing it to go tumbling down the steps and fall with a ringing noise upon the concrete walk. The boys drew quickly back, Tristram moaning and rubbing his foot (though he was laughing, too, all the time) and making altogether more fuss over the accident than, it seemed to Johnnie, was

prudent or necessary. At the same moment a burly female form made its appearance in the kitchen doorway.

“Faix, an’ *who’s* there?” this person cried out.

The two boys stood perfectly still; though Tristram did not forbear to make his remark, under breath. “It’s the cook, sure enough,” he muttered. Then he sang (if it be possible that one should sing in a whisper) a couplet from a song which he will be remembered to have used on a former occasion :

Then out spake the cook of our gallant ship;
And a jolly, fat cook was *she*

“Who’s there, I tell yez?” the woman peremptorily repeated.

Still receiving no reply, the woman stepped out doors, evidently quite certain that somebody was there; and then, catching sight of the scraper, came toward the steps. Johnnie, in that frightful moment, would have turned and fled; but Tristram—could it be that he really wished to be caught?—tightly clutched his arm and would not let him go. That instant they were discovered.

“Bad cess to ye for a pair o’ vagabones, an’ phwat are ye doin’ here, thin?” demanded the servant at once, not a bit dismayed, it would seem, at the encounter.

Tristram came down the steps. “Good avening to yez,” he said. “Troth, an’ we were lookin’ for a door.”

“A door is it? Faix then, an’ ye can’t expict to find a door where there’s nothing but windys. Couldn’t ye see the kitchen door when it was wide open?”

“No,” said Tristram. “We could have seen it better if it had been shut. Is Mollie in?”

“Mollie!” cried the cook. “Mollie who, thin?”

“As if you didn’t know her other name as well as I,” said Tristram.

“Well; and phwat is it the likes o’ you wants of Mollie?”

“We want to see her,” said Tristram. And then, with a wink and a good-humored smile, he added, “We’re her cousins from Cork.”

“Her cousins from Cork, are yez, thin?” The girl returned his look not ill-naturedly. Indeed,

she did not seem to be an ill-natured or suspicious sort of person. These, no doubt, were friends of Mollie. So, "She isn't home yet," she told them.

"Will she be in soon?" asked Tristram. "Because if she will, we'll come in and wait. We wanted to see her that special."

"Well, thin," replied the cook, apparently not averse to company, "come in an' sit down a while. She'll be home before long."

"Thank you, then, and we will." Tristram walked beside the girl toward the door, beckoning Johnnie at the same time to follow. The latter, however, hesitated and hung back a little, seriously distrustful of his comrade's intentions. Tristram stopped. "Hold on a bit," he said to the girl. "You haven't any dogs about the place, have you? My friend here is rather afraid of dogs."

"Dargs, is it!" exclaimed the cook. "Shure, an' we've only one darg about the place, an' he'll not hurt yez."

"Is he in the kitchen?" asked Tristram cautiously. "Where do you keep him?"

"No," said the woman reassuringly. "He's in

the music room. Ye needn't be afraid; he'll not come out. We don't let him out nights. There's somebody, bad luck to them, that wants to stale him."

"All right," said Tristram, and followed her in, Johnnie, in obedience to a second vigorous gesture, also reluctantly attending. "You see," Tristram went on, seeming disposed to continue the subject, "my friend, for some reason, is uncommonly afraid of dogs. He can't help it; it's born in him. He's a brave enough fellow ordinarily; too brave, in fact. Why, if you'll believe me, he regularly risks his life, three times a day, to my certain knowledge—every time he sits down to table. I often tell him he'll kill himself eating."

"Is that so!" The girl bestowed a look of combined awe and admiration upon Johnnie, who stood there by the door looking anything but the daring and reckless individual his companion seemed to make him out. "Well, he needn't be afraid of this darg," she said again.

"You are quite sure he wouldn't hurt us if he

did get out?" Tristram asked. "What kind of dog is he? Is he a big one?"

"No, indade!" cried the girl. "He isn't a big darg at all."

Tristram knit his brow reflectively. "I wish," said he, "that we could *see* the dog. My friend is *uncommonly* afraid of dogs, you know. Why, you can see for yourself, this minute, that he's all of a tremble about this one. But if he could only *see* him now, and know for himself that he's a perfectly harmless dog, he'd be all right. You couldn't bring him in, could you—just a moment?" He looked at her appealingly.

"Why, thin, I don't know but I might," responded the girl, "av it will do your friend any good. Poor feller!" She seemed greatly to commiserate Johnnie's infirmity. "Yes, I will. I'll go an' get him." And she turned to leave the room.

But alas! at that moment an interruption occurred. Directly opposite the door by which they had entered the kitchen was another outer door, also open. Through this door at this moment

came the sound of voices, not loud yet instantly recognizable as those of Miss Challis and Jemima — as though the two, strolling perhaps around the house, were approaching the doorway.

“Throth,” said the cook at once, “here’s Miss Helen. She’ll show you the darg. I’ll ask her.” She turned toward the door.

“Bother Miss Helen! I wish Miss Helen was in Kamschatka!” exclaimed Tristram, suddenly entirely serious and sincere. “Another minute and I would have had Rom out here and been off with him.”

“Come,” said Johnnie, “let’s be going.” He made a motion toward the other door.

Tristram sprang forward and seized his arm. Just beside them was a third door leading, evidently, toward the interior of the house. “Here,” he hurriedly said, “we’ll go this way. Come on, I know the way.”

And before Johnnie well knew what was being done with him he found himself standing in a dark passage, his friend’s hand still tightly gripping his arm, and the door closed behind them. Then,

as they stood there breathless a moment, they heard the cook's voice in the kitchen. "Why," she was saying, "they must have gone out the other door, the gossoons."

But Tristram did not linger here. He knew exactly where he was (he had obtained from Sinker Hotchkiss a complete diagram of the premises, all the more useful because it was carried in his head instead of on paper and could be consulted in the dark) and without hesitation he pushed Johnnie along the passage, opening a door at the other end and passing quickly with him into the room beyond. This room was lighted by a hanging lamp, beneath which stood a large table with only the cloth upon it. An old-fashioned, mahogany side-board, glittering with silver and glass, stood at one side. Handsome chairs with leathern seats were drawn back against the wall.

"Where on earth are we?" murmured Johnnie.

"Humph!" said Tristram. "A fellow as fond of his dinner as you are ought to know a dining-room when he sees it."

"What did you come in here for?"

“What did I come in here for? Well, I didn’t come to get my dinner; you may be sure of that. I haven’t time to wait. Come on; this must be the music room.” He led the way toward a door to the right. Half-way to it, he stopped and turned almost fiercely upon Johnnie. “What did I come in here for?” he repeated. “What do you suppose I came in here for? I came in here for my dog. And I’m not going away without him, *this time*, either!”

The door of this second room stood open. There was no light within save such as shone over the shoulders of the boys as they peered across the threshold. An upright piano could be dimly seen in one corner, and a music rack near by, and other articles of furniture here and there. On the floor in the middle of the room lay a dark object, a rug maybe, or a garment fallen there, or — could it possibly be alive? Tristram strode forward with beating heart. There was a stir and a growl. “Rom! Rom! Can it be you at last! Bless you, old fellow, don’t you know your own master?” He dropped upon his knees and threw

his arms about the prostrate form. Had the dog been twice a stranger (it will be remembered that, in point of fact, Remus and our hero had never met until this moment) he could not have resisted or resented so loving an onset as this.

But there was no time for greetings, however joyful. Tristram himself was all hurry now. He had found the dog at last; he could not too quickly get him out of the house and away to a place of safety. With eager fingers he took the collar from his pocket and slipped it over the dog's head, and then fastened to it the piece of string. This done he rose to his feet. "Come on, Lovey. We've no call to stay *here* any longer. I shake the dust of this place from my feet. Here, this leads to the library; we can go out through here to the front door."

Holding the dog by the string and still closely attended by Johnnie, he stepped to the door indicated and opened it. The instant he did so a stream of light rushed in. The library was lighted. Tristram thrust his head through the opening; and then instantly he drew it back again and shut

the door. "Shiver my timbers!" exclaimed he. "If there isn't the old three-decker himself!"

"The old who?" asked Johnnie.

"The Commodore. I thought he'd gone away."

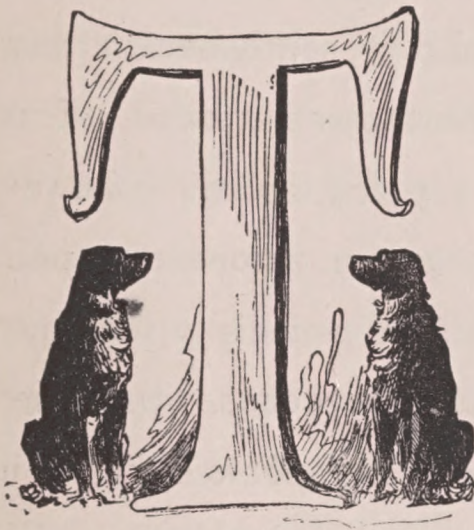
"He must have got back," whispered Johnnie.

"Yes; I think he must," said Tristram. "He's sitting there, reading, as large as life. Well, we can't go through there. We'll have to go through the dining-room. We can get into the front hall that way."

They turned therefore toward the other door again; but just as they reached it, lo! the door from the kitchen opened and Miss Challis and Jemima entered the dining-room. Tristram, vexed and alarmed, drew quickly back; and then the two boys stood there, scarce daring to breathe, behind the music-room door, peeping out through the crack at the new-comers.

CHAPTER XI.

SOME ICE CREAM AND A PICKLE.



HE idea," Miss Challis was saying as the girls came in, "of Norah's letting those men in, in that way, on the pretense that they were Mollie's cousins. They were probably

those two tramps that were here this afternoon."

"Yes," said Jemima. "I thought at the time they looked as though they would like to get into the house."

"Well," Miss Challis declared, "they can't get in now. I've locked all the back doors. And while I think of it I'll go and lock the front door

too. You can be bringing out the freezer while I do it. It's right in the pantry there."

Our two entrapped heroes (certainly they now felt themselves in a trap), listening and watching as well as they could from their place of retreat, saw the girls come back, after a moment, each from her respective errand, and presently became aware that a season of refreshment was at hand. It is a well-established fact that young ladies, however dainty and abstemious they may appear on public occasions, can at times (and especially perhaps at that hour which immediately precedes the time of retiring) show themselves as capable of doing justice to things good to eat as their brothers of the heartier sex ; and our two heroines, little dreaming that two boys were watching them through the crack of a door not a dozen feet away, did not prove themselves an exception to the rule on the present occasion. A cake basket piled high with gold and silver cake, a fruit dish from the side-board, a plate of berries and a freezer of ice cream were placed upon the table ; and then the girls drew up their chairs to the feast.

"I'm afraid this ice cream is rather soft," Miss Challis remarked, as she filled two of the saucers from the freezer. "It always is soft when you pack it over. It was hard enough at dinner time. It's awfully good, though." — She had stopped to taste it while still dipping it out. — "This is made from pure strawberry juice and not from any extract. I squeezed the berries myself. O-o-oo-oo!" She threw back her head, closed her eyes, and for a moment seemed to devote all her faculties to the enjoyment of another taste.

For some few minutes they sat there eating their ice cream, nibbling at the cake, tasting now and then of the fruit and berries, chatting volubly all the while of this and that. At length, when they had pretty well satisfied themselves, Miss Challis rose suddenly to her feet.

"Why, dear me!" she cried. "Here we have been enjoying ourselves in this way all this time and never once thought of the Commodore. He is passionately fond of ice cream too, and he wasn't here to have any at dinner. We'll take some aft to him at once."

She took out another saucer of the cream ; and then, filling another with berries, she placed the two upon a salver and bidding Jemima attend her with the cake, took up her line of march for the library, passing out from the dining-room by the door leading into the hall.

The two boys, in their place of concealment, breathed a joint sigh of relief. The past ten minutes had been a trying period, trying especially to Johnnie who in all his life had never known such hardship as being compelled to stand there motionless, forbidden even to smack his lips, and see those girls eating cake and ice cream (talking about it all the while in the most aggravating terms) and he not permitted to have one bit of it. The pains of Tantalus were no longer a myth to him. He had been standing, peering out over Tristram's shoulder, the latter half crouching and holding on to the dog. And no sooner, now, was he assured that the two girls had left the room than he stepped back ; and before Tristram at all understood his intention he was out of the door and making his way on tiptoe toward the table.

"Here, you crazy-head," Tristram called after him in an angry whisper. "Where are you going? Come back here! They'll be in again in a minute."

But Johnnie did not come back. He could not. He was not master of his own movements. He held straight on, answering not, halting not, drawn by a force which he was powerless to resist. *He was going to have some of that ice cream.*

He took one of the saucers and quickly filled it heaping full, devouring the delicious compound all the while with his eyes before he came to taste it, noting with ecstasy the delicate pink of its color, such tint as only the genuine juice of the berry could produce. Then, saucer in hand, he looked around the table. Misery of miseries! They had taken away the cake. Never mind; there were some broken pieces on Jemima's plate. And there were the berries. He added a few of the latter to his cream. Then, seizing a spoon, he prepared to eat. A spoonful of the mixture was on its way to his mouth.

But alas! from his very lips, as it were, the

cup was dashed. All at once there was heard again the sound of voices in the hall. The girls were coming back. The spoon paused in mid-air. Johnnie looked wildly about him. He knew that he must fly; and yet, to fly at such a moment! But he would not go empty-handed. He held fast to his saucer with one hand and with the other he seized the cake upon the plate. Then he turned — it was full time; the sounds were now dangerously near — to go back whence he had come. Unfortunately, in his preoccupied state of mind, he had taken little note of the position of things; and now, seeing the pantry door wide open before him, he mistook it, in the terror of the moment, for that of the music room. With one bound he crossed the threshold. When he realized his mistake it was too late to correct it. The girls had reëntered the dining-room.

Tristram, gnashing his teeth at Johnnie's folly, still peeped through the crack. Miss Challis came first within his line of vision. There was something peculiar in her manner. She walked with a quick, resolute step directly past the table. "I

do wish, Jemima," she sharply exclaimed, "that you would learn to shut doors. Here is the pantry wide open." She went to the pantry door and, leaning rather than stepping across the threshold, pulled it to with a slam — at the same time (though this Tristram did not see) turning the key and taking it out of the lock. Then she whirled around, pale as a ghost.

"Jemima," said she in a low, intense voice, "run, quick, and speak to father. *Those two men are in this closet.*"

Jemima uttered a little scream. "Why, aunt Helen! O, dear! How do you know?"

"I saw one of them as I came in from the hall. I've locked the door, so they can't get out. Go and tell him."

Jemima screamed again and then ran out of the room as fast as she could go. Miss Challis stood there motionless by the pantry door, listening fearfully for any sound within. Tristram meanwhile industriously searched his vocabulary for all the synonyms he could think of to the word idiot, and applied them in a bunch to his friend.

Lovey had gotten them into a pretty pickle, along with his ice cream !

It took scarcely a half minute however to bring the Commodore upon the scene. He looked eminently warlike as he came in, brandishing aloft a huge boarding cutlass — one of the library ornaments — with one hand, while with the other he vainly sought to free his coat-skirts from the tenacious grasp of Miss Jemima who, like a transport-ship in time of danger, clung closely to her consort.

“Two men !” cried he, glaring fiercely about. “Where are they? Show me the rascals. Eh? In the pantry?” He strode across the room (Jemima relinquishing her hold and falling back as the scene of action was approached) and, trying the pantry door and finding it locked, beat upon it with the hilt of his cutlass. “Within, there! Ahoy! Unlock this door — or, by the bones of Kempenfeldt, I’ll break it into ten thousand pieces, and you with it! What are you doing in my pantry? Open the door, I say !”

“But, father,” his daughter here interrupted, “the door is locked on the outside. I locked it.”

“You?” The Commodore looked around a little bewildered. “Where is the key, then?”

“O, father,” pleaded the young lady in tremulous accents. “Don’t go in there. Please do not. Wait until Edward comes.”

“Edward! What do I want of Edward? It is those two men that I want. Give me the key.”

Miss Challis on this produced the key; and the Commodore, taking it, unlocked the door and threw it open. The two girls drew hastily back as though they expected somebody to rush out. The old gentleman stood firmly, weapon in hand, prepared to receive any such upon its point. But no one appeared; and as they peered within the light which had preceded their anxious glances, illuminating the apartment more or less completely, failed to discover to them any human presence. The only sign of such presence was an empty ice cream saucer with the spoon upon it, standing on the shelf.

“Humph!” grunted the Commodore. “There’s nobody here. What d’ye mean, making all this fuss about nothing?”

“But I certainly saw one of them,” Miss Challis solemnly declared. “I caught a glimpse of him, as Jemima and I came in from the hall, just as he was disappearing.”

“Well,” growled her father, “he must have disappeared altogether. There’s nobody in here now.” He spoke from inside the pantry.

“They couldn’t have crawled out through the slide, could they?” suggested Jemima. By the slide she meant an opening in the rear of the pantry, through which dishes were passed to and from the kitchen.

“No indeed!” said Miss Challis. “The one I saw was a big, broad-shouldered fellow; he never could have gotten through there.”

But at that moment sounds of disturbance were heard within — a muffled cry as of some one roughly seized upon, a noise of tugging and scuffling, and the shouts and growlings and threatenings of the intrepid Commodore who seemed suddenly to have discovered the intruders.

“Ah, you scoundrel, here you are, are you? Hi, hi! You needn’t think to escape that way. Come



THE OLD COMMODORE STOOD FIRMLY, WEAPON IN HAND.

out of that lubber's-hole. Come out here, I say—or by the Boots of Bombastes, I'll pull your legs out!”

Then all at once there was a sound as of two persons falling heavily together upon the floor, amid repeated ragings and exclamations on the part of the old seaman. Jemima clasped her hands before her and gave utterance to a quick series of screams. Miss Challis, pale and trembling, yet looked resolutely about her in search of some weapon with which to arm herself and go to her father's aid. But the next moment the Commodore himself emerged from the pantry, much rumpled in appearance but flushed with victory, holding at arms-length, firmly grasped by the collar, an impotently struggling prisoner.

“There!” cried he, panting for breath and as he spoke seeming to lift his prize fairly off his feet and set him down with a slam upon the floor. “There are your two men!”

The girls regarded with vast amazement the object thus vehemently produced. It was not two men; it was not even one “big, broad-shouldered

fellow ;” it was simply our unfortunate friend Johnnie, standing there limp and dishevelled before them, his head hanging down, his shoulders drooping, his knees bent, every line and curve of his stout little figure utterly cast down and dejected. The contrast between this unheroic appearance and the formidable shape that Miss Challis’s excited fancy had conjured was too much for the young ladies. They both burst out laughing.

“Why,” cried Miss Challis so soon as she was able, “it’s one of those boys from the boat-house that I’ve shut up in the pantry. And O, do look ! How dreadful ! *It has turned his hair perfectly white !*”

They all looked, and lo ! it was quite true. The prisoner’s hair was white as Bonnivard’s. Johnnie himself, struck with fear at her words, put his hand to his head and then looked at his fingers. They too were white. In fumbling about the pantry shelves he had accidentally knocked off and precipitated upon himself a package of plaster of paris.

But the Commadore was little inclined to view

his prisoner in a mirthful light. "I don't care what color his hair is," he avowed. "I want to know what he was doing in there. You, sir" — he gave Johnnie's collar a tighter turn at the same time twisting the poor fellow's head around so as to savagely confront him — "what were you doing in my pantry at this time o' night? Answer me! Speak, sirrah! Are you deaf and dumb?"

Johnnie was not deaf and dumb, but he was forced to resort to the sign-language to let his captor know that his shirt collar must be loosened before he could put his throat to its legitimate use as an organ of speech.

"Well, then," repeated the Commodore, relaxing his grasp a little, "what were you doing in my pantry?"

"Nothing," gurgled Johnnie.

"Nothing!" The Commodore was in one of his tempests instantly. "Nothing!" he shouted in a voice of thunder, and, like the flash of accompanying lightning, his sword played about the prisoner's head. "Great Guns and Bullets! Nothing, is it? Couldn't you find any other place than

my pantry to do nothing in at ten o'clock in the evening? I'll give you nothing, sir! I've a great mind to string you up in true man-o'-wars-man style and let you dance on nothing — or shut you up there again with your nothing, and feed you on nothing for a fortnight." The old gentleman paused in his speech for lack of breath, but he still found energy to seize upon the shudder that (at the last terrible threat) had passed over the prisoner's frame and convert it into a violent and prolonged shaking.

At this point, all at once, Miss Challis also seemed to realize something serious in the situation.

"I know what he was doing in there," she exclaimed. "He has come here — he and that other one — to try and get Remus away." Then she too confronted Johnnie with an air of fierce demand. "Where is he — your companion? Is he in the pantry?"

"N-n-no," gasped Johnnie, shaking his head. He still spoke with difficulty.

"Where is he then? Tell me this instant!"

Poor Johnnie! Judge him kindly if you can. He was not of the stuff of which martyrs are made. A braver fellow would have shut his lips tight and refused to betray his friend; but this Johnnie was not capable of doing. He knew too well the horrible torture to which this young lady would put him to force from him an answer. He did not tell her in words — he realized that Tristram was listening — but with a single base motion of his hand toward the music room he indicated not less definitely his comrade's whereabouts.

Miss Challis, with a startled look, turned instantly and walked to the music room door. She was not afraid of Tristram, if Tristram was there. But indeed it was not of Tristram she was thinking, but of Remus. She spoke the dog's name as she crossed the threshold, first inquiringly, then in accents that took on the tones of despair. She rushed into the room, searched by the dim half-light its every corner, still agonizingly calling the name of the loved one. But all was silent. The room was empty. Remus was gone.

She came quickly out, almost beside herself.

She went straight up to Johnnie, both her hands outstretched; and for an instant the poor lad believed that she meant to seize him then and there and tear him into strips. Scarcely less terrible to him, however, as she halted before him, was the angry ring of her voice and (more fearful far than the play of the Commodore's sword) the lightning-flash of her eyes.

"Where is my dog?" she cried out at him. "Tell me where my dog is! Tell me!—*Tell me!*—if you ever expect to leave this house alive!"

Johnnie for the life of him could not answer at the moment, though the trouble at his throat was this time internal. He was choking with fear. He could only feebly gesture in reply, motioning with his hand in a direction which might be described as that of "all out doors."

"Tell us what you have done with the dog!" roared the Commodore, giving him another shake and, in his wrath, even pricking his legs with the cutlass. But Johnnie scarcely heard him or felt the point of the weapon. Was not that dreadful young woman standing there, running him through

and through with the blade of her keen-edged glance?

“Where is my dog? Tell me — *quick!*” Miss Challis once again demanded, with such voice and mien that Johnnie felt that he *must* answer now or be instantly annihilated.

“He’s ou-out in the He-Heptagon Room,” the poor fellow managed to say. And the reader will remember that he believed he was telling the truth. He would no more have thought of telling this young lady a lie than of wilfully going without his dinner.

“In the Heptagon Room!” Again Miss Challis turned and swiftly sped from the room. This time she was gone several minutes, during which the group left behind remained grimly stationary and silent. The Commodore never let go his hold of the prisoner’s collar; Johnnie still hung his head and looked the criminal he was not; and Jemima fixed her eyes upon him still in mingled mirth and wonder.

When Miss Challis came back she had Romulus with her, leading him by the strap which she

seemed to have detached from the hitching-weight. The expression on her face as she entered the room, though it was quite a new one, was not one of relief and joy at having found her dog again; it was rather one of perplexity and trouble, as though the finding had suddenly involved her in fresh difficulty. She led the dog straight to Johnnie.

"Is this my dog?" she sternly inquired of him. Johnnie nodded his head.

"Are you *sure*?"

"Yes," murmured Johnnie, "I'm sure."

"How do you know it is?" The young lady's manner was strange.

"Because — because I do," answered Johnnie.

"Could you take your oath to it, sir, in a court of justice?"

"Why, ye-es," stammered Johnnie, "I — I suppose I could." He began to feel as though he were indeed being cross-examined on his oath, in a court of law.

"O, you *suppose* you could!" Miss Challis spoke with withering scorn; and yet there was at the

same time, and there had been all the while, a pathetic undertone in her voice of deep doubt and trouble. And suddenly now she turned to the others and threw out both her hands in a gesture of utter and terrible despair. "It is of no use," she cried. "I don't know whether this is my dog or not, and I never shall know. I left him in the music room and I find him out in the Heptagon Room; and those boys have been here, and they may have taken my dog away and left theirs in his place, and they may not. No, no!" — She impatiently put up her hand at Johnnie as he was about to speak. — "You need not say a word. I should not believe you if you told me. I never shall believe anybody. And I never shall know. O, dear! O, dear! O, dear! What *shall* I do!" She looked piteously around upon them all, still with outstretched hands, seemingly about to burst into tears.

But at that moment occurred a strange and startling interruption. Through the open hall-door and from the direction of the library suddenly there came a noise — or rather a succession

of noises — the sharp yelp of a dog, the exclamation of a human voice, the sound of a falling body, and again the yelping of a dog. The whole group stood for a moment spell-bound. Miss Challis was the first to recover herself. "Ah!" cried she. "It is the other dog! Perhaps, after all, it is not too late." And she darted from the room.

CHAPTER XII.

ROMULUS ET REMUS.

TRISTRAM had witnessed it all through the crack of the music room door — the siege and storming of the pantry, the capture of Johnnie, and the latter's ignominious treatment at the hands of his relentless captors. With the Commodore (as well as both the girls) now in the dining-room he had realized that his own retreat by the front door was at length possible ; but Tristram at least was no traitor ; he could not go and leave his friend in the enemies' hands. Even to get safely off with his recovered dog (he fondly laid his hand on the head of the supposed Romulus as he so assured himself) he could not do that. Let it be defeat, even now, if it must be ; but not dishonor.

But all in one moment, as he stood there peering out, this feeling changed. He heard that

question put by Miss Challis, "Where is your companion?" he saw Johnnie feebly motion with his hand; and he knew that he had been betrayed. "O, you coward! You poltroon!" he muttered, shaking his fist at his friend. And at the moment he was thoroughly angry and disgusted, though no one knew better than he that nothing heroic was to be expected of Lovey. "Very well. So be it. I don't think I am bound to stay here any longer on *your* account." And taking Remus in his arms he stealthily passed out from the music room into the adjoining library, softly closing the door behind him, just as Miss Challis came in.

The library was a handsome apartment with walls well lined with books. Tristram did not stop to note its appointments however. He did not stop, as his friend Johnnie might have done, even to help himself to a piece of cake from the basket that stood on the table. He went, with the dog, directly across to the hall door, and from there (first looking out to assure himself that he would not be seen from the dining-room) he

stepped quickly to the outer door. Another moment and he would be at liberty.

But here, alas! was another difficulty. The door was not only locked — this Tristram had expected — but the key was gone. Miss Challis, not thinking what she was doing perhaps, had taken it out when she locked the door, just as she had done the key of the pantry. Tristram uttered his dismay in a low whistle. Then, seeing nothing better to be done, he turned back to the library; but at the door, noting the sudden silence that had fallen upon the dining-room, he halted to listen. He heard Miss Challis come in again from the Heptagon Room with the other dog, and he waited to catch what followed. Then, laughing to himself at the turn affairs had taken, he hastened across the library to one of the long windows. Here was a way out at all events. The screen in the window stuck; and, the better to raise it, he put the dog down on the floor; but in so doing he accidentally let go the string. Remus, finding himself free (and possibly scenting the presence of another dog) started straightway for the door.

Tristram sprang after just in time to set his foot upon the string, bringing the dog up with an abruptness that caused him to utter a cry. Then followed instantly the final mishap. In reaching forward to seize the dog Tristram brought his kneecap into violent contact with the Commodore's easy chair that stood by the table. The blow hurt him sorely, and he involuntarily lifted his leg from the floor and clasped his hands above the injured part, hardly able to keep from howling himself. Remus at the moment gave a vigorous pull at the string; and our unfortunate hero, standing on one leg, lost his balance and fell with a crash to the floor; while the frightened dog, involved in the ruin, gave vent to another sharp yelp. There was an instant of awful silence and then the sound of approaching steps. Tristram realized that the game was up. He took the dog in his arms and sat there on the floor holding him tight, quite reckless as to what might happen next.

"Sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish," he declared aloud, "I'll never let go this dog again."

"Whose dog have you there?"

Tristram looked up and there was Miss Challis, flushed and hostile, standing in the doorway. Romulus was with her, pulling at his strap now to get at the other dog.

"Whose dog have you there? Tell me this instant!" The young lady sternly repeated her demand. She did not exhibit any surprise or indignation at finding him there, or triumph at having caught him, or wonder at his strange position. There was room in her mind for but one thought, one question: which of the dogs was hers?

Tristram deliberately got up from the floor, holding Remus, at short quarters, by the string. The two dogs were now fully occupied with each other.

"You'll excuse my sitting down," he imperturbably observed. "Circumstances over which I had no control" —

"Whose dog have you there?" once again the young lady demanded.

"Well, Miss Challis," said Tristram, "if you insist upon knowing — he's mine."

“How do you know he is yours? Where did you get him?”

Tristram seemed to take a moment for reflection, absently rubbing the side of his nose with his eyeglasses. “That,” said he, “is a question which, in the absence of counsel, I shall decline to answer.”

“Did you take him from the music room? Tell me at once! I must know!” She imperiously stamped her foot.

Tristram screwed his face the least bit, not at all intimidated. He was in a thoroughly defiant mood now, and quite capable of “chaffing” even Miss Helen Challis. “Excuse me,” he replied, “but I refuse to commit myself.”

Miss Challis stepped forward (the Commodore and Jemima, with Johnnie also, were now close behind her) and searchingly bent her eyes on Remus as he stood at Tristram’s side. Then for a moment she looked down fixedly at Rom. Then her glance passed slowly several times between the two. And at length, with a deep sigh, she looked up slowly, shaking her head. “No,” she

mournfully declared, "I never shall know again which one of them is mine. I never could feel certain now, no matter *what* anybody said. O, why" — she turned with anguished voice to our hero — "*why* did you come here, to rob me of my peace of mind forever!"

At this juncture suddenly a new voice made itself heard. Edward, the coachman, having just returned, had come in to ask some question of the Commodore. From the rear of the group he had caught sight of the two dogs and comprehended Miss Challis's trouble. Edward was an old and trusted servant, a quiet, sensible fellow who rarely said very much, but who always knew what he was talking about.

"Why, Miss Helen," he spoke up, "can't you tell which is your own dog? Wait a minute till I show you."

He advanced into the room — the others coming forward also — and looked down at the dogs, marvelling no less than the rest at their wonderful resemblance. "They do look alike," said he. "As near alike as them two fire-dogs on the hearth

there. However, I'm something of a dog-man myself, Miss Helen ; and I bought Remus for you in the first place. I reckon I can pick him out. Here, you sir, come here."

The last words were addressed to Romulus ; and as he spoke he stooped and took hold of the dog's head, Miss Challis still holding the strap. He carefully examined the animal, his hair, his marks, his shape, the color of his eyes — finally opening his mouth and seeming to look down his very throat. Then he turned to Remus and — though much more briefly — subjected him to the same process. Then he rose to his feet.

"*There's* your dog, Miss Helen," he said with cool positiveness, and pointed to Remus.

"You are quite mistaken, my friend," Tristram instantly spoke up. "This dog is mine. I've owned him for a year."

"Mistaken, am I?" said Edward. "Maybe I am. You've owned that dog a year, have you?"

"Yes ; and over," returned Tristram.

"Was there any particular mark about your dog by which you could identify him?"

“No,” said Tristram. “But that makes no difference.”

“Were any of his teeth broken, do you remember?”

“Why, yes,” Tristram exclaimed. “Now you speak of it, of course there was. One of his back teeth, in the lower jaw, on the right side, was broken off. I did it for him myself, one time, trying to get a croquet wicket away from him.”

“Very good,” observed Edward calmly. “Just look at that dog’s teeth, will you?”

Tristram stooped down, perfectly unconcerned, and opened Remus’s mouth. A single glance sufficed to produce a change in his manner. He uttered an exclamation, dragged the dog nearer the light and looked again. But he looked in vain. The dog’s lower jaw was perfect; every tooth was there. The inference of course was irresistible, though Tristram did not at the instant draw it. He looked up bewildered. “What does this mean?” he asked.

“Look in the mouth of the other dog,” Edward told him.

Tristram got up—absently handing Edward the string to which Remus was attached—and went over to where Romulus was standing. He stooped again and opened Rom's mouth, just as he had done it a hundred times before; and there, plain as could be, was the broken tooth. The evidence, now, was absolutely conclusive. This dog was Romulus. Tristram straightened up once more, looking rather shamefaced.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said he, "I don't understand it. I could have sworn by the good looks of all the Tuckermans that that dog yonder was mine. But he isn't. He belongs to Miss Challis. *This* is my dog." He laid his hand on Rom's collar.

"O, Edward," Miss Challis joyfully cried out. "Is 'this true? Are you quite sure that that is Remus?"

"There isn't a doubt of it, Miss Helen."

"O, I'm so glad!" Miss Challis dropped the strap and ran quickly over to Remus, putting her arms tight around his neck. "I am so glad," she repeated, "to know with perfect certainty that he is

mine. I shall keep fast hold of him till that other one is gone, to make sure they don't get mixed again." She passed her hand fondly over the dog's head. All at once she looked up very fiercely at Tristram. "Look here, sir," she cried. "If this dog is mine, then you must have taken him from the music room."

"Yes," said Tristram, "I may as well confess it; I did. I thought he was mine. And I don't understand now —"

"Never mind, sir, what you don't understand!" The young lady rose to her feet and with heightened color confronted him. Tristram perceived instantly that a warm wave was approaching and about to become central in his vicinity. "*I* understand, sir! I understand that you have come into this house, secretly, at ten o'clock at night, and taken my dog — is not that my dog, sir?"

"Yes," Tristram humbly admitted, "it is."

—"Have come into this house," the young lady went on, "and taken *my* dog; and would have gone off with him — *stolen* him — if you had not been stopped. Is that true or is it not?"

"Yes," Tristram again reluctantly acknowledged. "I can't deny it in the face of the evidence."

"Ah, then," cried the young lady, while her black eyes snapped and her upraised finger shook itself fiercely at the cringing object of her denunciation, "you confess it, do you — you who 'could not be mistaken' — you who 'knew your own dog' — you confess that *you* mistook my dog for yours; nay, worse than that, that you actually brought your dog here, believing him to be mine, and left him here, and *took mine*, thinking he was yours — you confess all this? Well, then" — Miss Challis's manner suddenly became calm with the calmness of withering irony — "may I ask what you think of yourself, sir?"

"I think," responded Tristram with an air of conviction, "that I am a deep-dyed, double-distilled, unmitigated, incurable idiot — about eight hundred thousand times as stupid as I thought you were when you mistook my dog for yours in the first place."

"Oho!" Miss Challis's tone was suddenly completely changed; and changed also, marvellously

changed, was her whole look and manner. Down, down went the mercury to regions of temperate mildness. In an instant, as it were, all was sunshine and balm. Naples, Florida, Los Angeles, Araby the Blest, all combined, had been nothing to this. Tristram would fain have dwelt in such a clime forever. "Oho!" cried Miss Challis, and fairly beamed upon him, while the motion of her finger now was in itself a kind of delicious, reassuring laughter. "You have said exactly what I wanted you to say. 'Eight hundred thousand times as stupid as I was.' You confess it?"

"Yes," said Tristram, smiling back at her. "Or — I don't mind making it a million, for that matter." He was now in a thoroughly generous mood.

"Never mind; eight hundred thousand is near enough. Well, then, if you feel that way about it, I don't know that I mind, now, acknowledging (though I never *meant* to do it) that *I* was mistaken in the first place — when I took your dog away from you. Please forgive me." Miss Challis's manner, at this last, was as pretty as her words.

"Forgive you!" exclaimed Tristram. "I'll forgive you, precious quick, if you will forgive me. I can understand *your* mistake well enough, when I look at the dogs. But what I don't understand even now, is how I came to make mine. If you had my dog in the first place, and have had him ever since, then why isn't *that* my dog?" He looked at Remus.

"O," cried Miss Challis, "but I *haven't* had your dog ever since." And then she told of the change she had made in the dogs on the morning that Mr. Artemas Trimmer had come to see her.

"Ah!" murmured Tristram. "That explains it."

"Yes," a voice echoed close beside him, "that explains it." It was Johnnie who, with the rest, had listened with vast interest to what had passed and to whom now all was also plain.

"Hello, Lovey, are you there?" said Tristram. "It is thus then we meet." He held out his hand; he felt far too good at this moment to remember Johnnie's treachery against him.

Then he turned to the Commodore. "I'm glad,

sir, that you've seen fit to release my friend," said he. "He really isn't such a hardened villain as he looks. And we beg your pardon, both of us, for the way we've come into your house to-night. Of course we'd no business to do it. Only, you'll acknowledge, sir, that it was rather hard on us to have our dog taken away from us as he was, and nothing that we could say or do make any difference."

"All right, sir! All right!" returned the Commodore bluffly. "And we beg your pardon too. Only, Zounds!"—he gazed with renewed wonder upon the two dogs—"I don't see how the dickens we could help ourselves. *I* can't tell 'em apart now."

"This one is Romulus," said Tristram, looking down at his own dog.

"And this one is Remus," said Miss Challis, shaking the string attached to hers.

"Romulus and Remus," repeated Jemima. "Isn't it queer that two dogs looking so much alike should have had names that go together too?"

“Miss Helen,” interposed Edward, who still lingered on the scene, “I’ve a notion, if you please, about those dogs. Did you name your dog yourself, sir?” This question was to Tristram.

“No,” answered Tristram, “the name came with him. I thought it a good one and so I kept it.”

“Where did you get him?” Edward asked.

“I bought him at the big bench show in Boston, a year ago this spring.”

“Did the man you bought him of say anything about his having had a mate?”

“No,” said Tristram.

“What kind of looking man was he?”

“He was a short, stout, neat-looking man, a Scotchman.”

“It’s the very one!” declared Edward. “Now I’ll tell you. Just before that bench show you speak of, I bought Remus, in Boston, for Miss Helen—of just such a man, a Scotchman. He had two pups, twins, so near alike that I found it hard to choose between them. He said he hated to sell either; he wanted to exhibit them together at the show. He told me this one’s name—

‘Remus’ — when I took him. He didn’t tell me the name of the other one; but I haven’t a particle of doubt that it was ‘Romulus,’ and that *that* is the dog.”

“It certainly looks so,” said Tristram.

“Then they are brothers!” cried Miss Challis, clapping her hands. She looked down rapturously at the dogs. Here was a genuine romance.

And at that moment Romulus and Remus, fairly getting their heads together at last, gazed questioningly into each other’s eyes, rubbed their black noses, whined delightedly, and then, each rising upon his hinder limbs, threw their fore legs about each other’s necks with all possible ardor and affection. Who shall say that they too did not realize at that moment the strange fact (for fact it was) in their history which had just come to light, and that each was not saying to the other, in language quite plain at least to them — “Then you are my long-lost brother!”

“Well,” Tristram at length observed with a sigh, taking his soft hat from his pocket and unrolling

it. "I suppose we ought to be going. I'm glad it's all right at last."

"O, don't go yet," cried Miss Challis cordially. "It's not late. Sit down a few moments, do, and let us bring you some refreshments. We can't offer you any ice cream," she continued, after they were seated; and she gave Johnnie a roguish glance, whereupon that young gentleman hung his head in confusion, remembering the empty saucer in the pantry. "It is too soft, I'm afraid. But we can give you some cake. Jemima, pass the cake, please."

So Jemima took the cake basket from the table and offered it to Johnnie. "Will you take some cake, Mr. Lovering?" How she knew what his name was we do not pretend to say. Do not young ladies always know young gentlemen's names?

"Ah, Miss Jemima," observed Tristram, "Mr. Lovering always takes the cake." And he said it with such desperate gravity that to this day Miss Jemima has not been able to determine whether he intended a joke or not.

And then Mollie came in bringing some straw-

berries, with sugar and cream; and they all sat cosily around, the best of friends at last having the best of times.

“Miss Challis,” said Tristram by and by, setting down his saucer and looking over to where, carelessly thrown upon the table, lay a certain gayly embroidered object, “you have a beautiful racket-case there. May I look at it a moment?”

He had reached the subject of lawn tennis at last.

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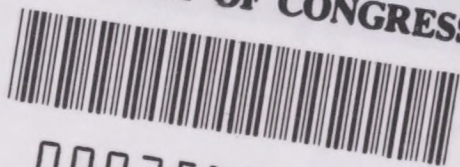
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